



THE APPEAL OF JESUS

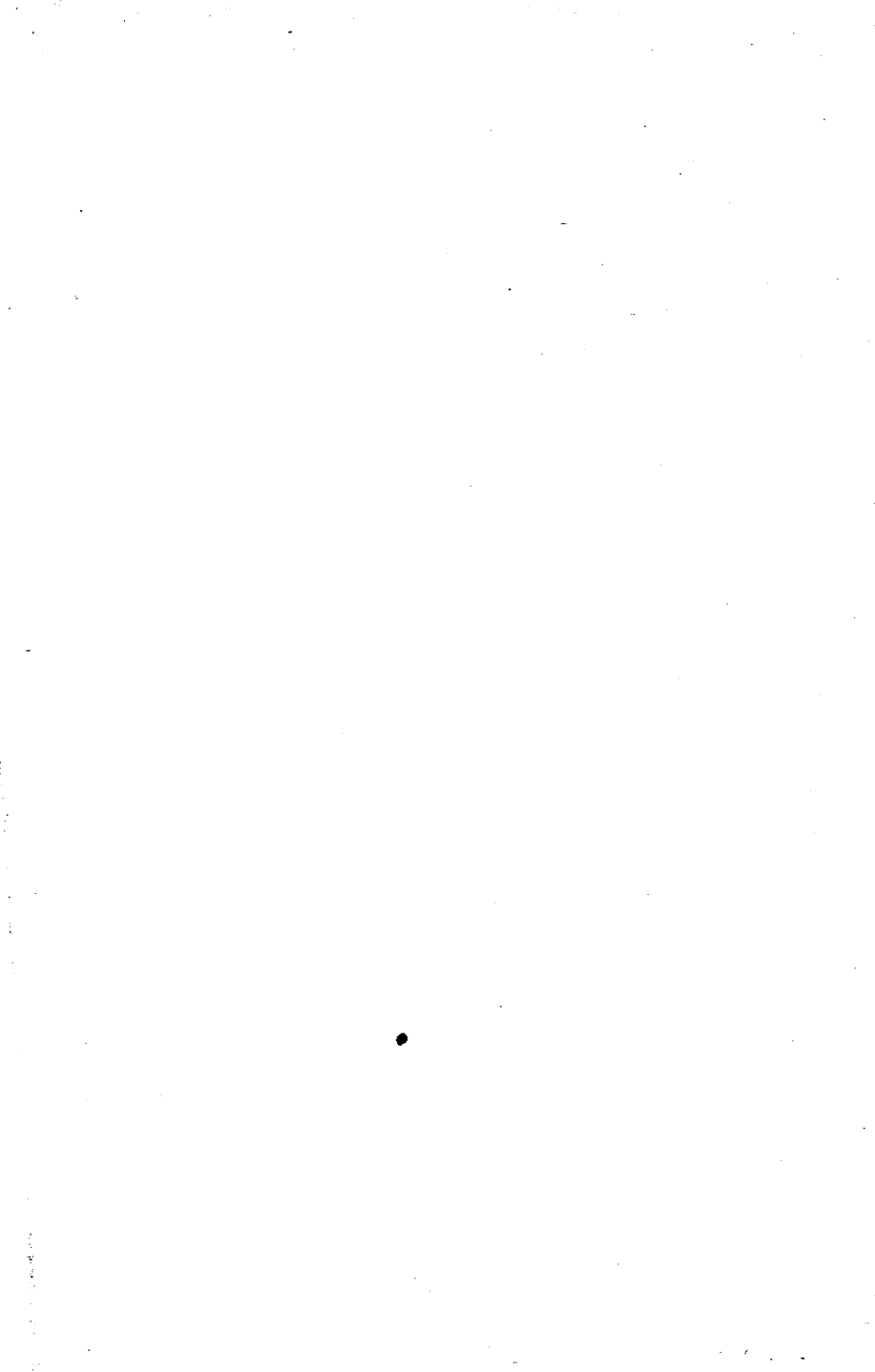


T.S. CAIRNCROSS, B.D.

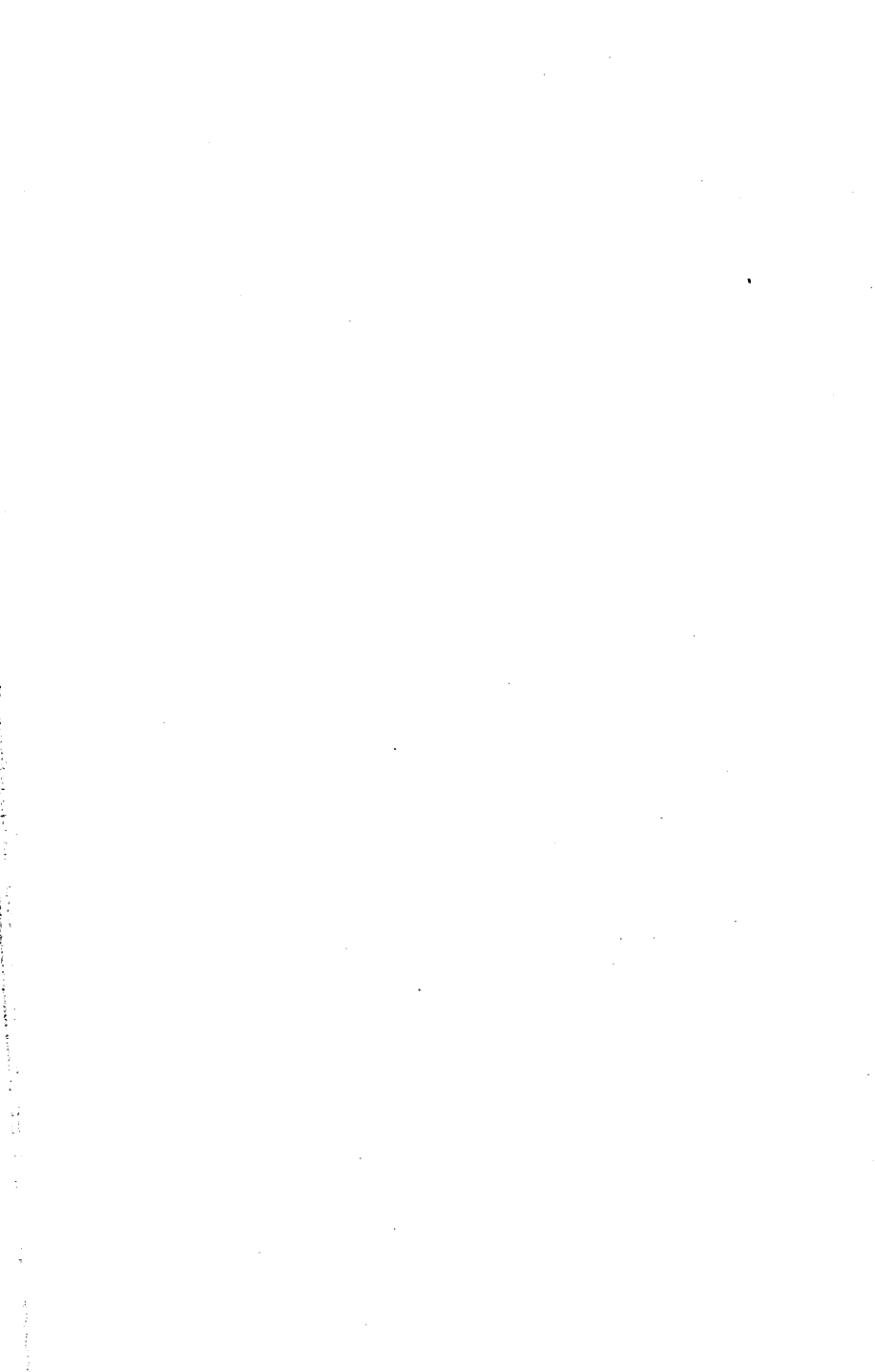
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BY

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LONDON

JAMES CLARKE & CO.

13 & 14, FLEET STREET

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THESE GLEANINGS
OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT ARE
DEDICATED GRATEFULLY TO ALL TO WHOM
IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO MINISTER, FOR IT
IS TO THEIR KINDNESS AND FORBEARANCE
THAT THE BOOK OWES
ITS EXISTENCE

IN this little volume I have tried to put together a readable account of some things that have appealed to me regarding the Central Figure of History. It is good to know that to many minds Christ is both a problem and the solution of it, and if through the fog of modern thought this Figure more clearly shines my purpose will have been served.

Many springs have been drawn upon for the book, as the expert will see, and it would be a matter of difficulty to name all the various authorities that are referred to, even if any great service would be rendered to the general reader by doing so.

I wish to acknowledge here the help I have so willingly received from Rev. Archibald Main, B.A. (Oxon), D.Litt., and Rev. Robert Munro, B.D., in preparing the book for publication.

T. S. C.

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Preparing the Way

I

BEFORE the birth of Christ the world lay in a long desolation, and the word of the Lord was precious in those days ; there was no open vision. Darkness brooded over the earth as once long before, when the earth was without form and void. This darkness was not of God's making, for man's own hands had drawn the cloud across the sun. The flowers of Eden had withered at the touch, and nothing had ever brought back their splendour and their glory which they had had when they came fresh from the hand of God. On that day when these two lonely figures passed by the gates, something was lost to the world which nothing could restore. Great as the Judges of Israel were, and large as they loomed in history, they had not the fineness or the massiveness of those whose home had been in the innocence of Eden. They were men of the wilderness, living among the thorns and the briars. The doom of the flaming sword was upon them, the sword that guarded Eden and turned every way. The kings of Israel were great, great even in their fall, but they were all men who failed, men of destiny at times, and

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meeting the fate the men of destiny meet. Go over the list, if you will, and see what flaming beacons they are, even David with his inspiration and remorse embalmed as it is in his imperishable songs of the green hills and the house of God ; even Solomon with his wisdom—his worldly wisdom—and his pathetic literary regrets. The Prophets, too—they were the really great men of their age, as they are of every age. Yet their triumph was the triumph of men who failed. They were dauntless to the verge of madness, and they broke physically under the strain. It has been said that in the end the test of success is physical. Ultimately it is not so. There is a breaking-strain to the strongest, and finally it is not of the body. These men gave their bodies freely to martyrdom, and yet it did not suffice. They lacked something, which so far as we are concerned with here, is everything. They all saw the evil of the world, and they did what they could to remedy it. But their all was not enough. Their voices fell in space, and their words were blown away in the wind. Their burdens were heavier than they could carry. Their rage fell for a large part on idle ears. Their very tears were vain, and died in the stars : their labours were vain, their arms fell helpless by their side, and they themselves died, and man remained where he was. They were man's tragedy of the return to God. It was when all else had failed that God set The Child in the midst.

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The Scriptural phrase which tells when Christ came is "the fulness of the time." He came when all things were prepared, and the preparation for Christ was long; but not too long when we take into account the importance of the event. "Who goes slow, he goes sure and he goes far" is how the easy-natured Italian puts it. God works without haste and without rest. He gathers all His materials for His work, and when He begins He also makes an end. God does not need to hurry, for He has eternity in which to work. So the preparation for Christ was long from the world's point of view, for it cannot look upon a thousand years as but a day, or as a watch in the night. Thus when all things were ready, in the fulness of time, Christ came.

Of course it is always so, even in the world's way, if we could but see it. It may be that there are those born out of their due time, like Paul, or like some who have been, as they thought, the founders of nothing or but the idle singers of an empty day. Yet it is with the hour that the man comes. The hour strikes and the man is there, like Saul among the people. All the people acclaim him king, for he is head and shoulders above them all. Perhaps this very modesty and unwillingness are but an added proof, for when they seek for Saul he cannot be found. But his hiding among the stuff does not avail him. The gods are just. A man can only hide behind what is greater than himself and never from the eyes

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of the gods. This is the romance of Saul, who like Absalom gathers so much of the romance of life into his crowded hour. Carlyle has brought in his own vivid way the hero and the hour together, but life did that before him, and it has always done so, and there has always been a hero for the hour. This is no explanation of the production of the hero. For the hero is born for the hour, and that is almost all that may be said. He brings with him an element of the incalculable, as Christ did, but he is the expression of the needs of his age and of the men of his time. He is the product of his age and the epitome of it. Environment has something to do with his production, for how could he answer to his age if he were not produced by it? As a person or in his personality he surmounts his age, for genius always rises above its age. As a worker he must needs accommodate himself to the facts of his time, and in doing so, transcend them.

It has been said that a child's education begins several hundred years before it is born. There is a good deal of truth in the saying. So God wrought far back before Christ came. He began by setting aside a people whom He prepared for producing the Messiah.

The history of the Jew is the history of the world. Our God is still the God of Jacob, which is as much as to say that He can be the God of any one. The Jew, in spite of his rejection of Christ, will always stand for what is immortally highest

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in religion. The Jew, indeed, will always stand identified with the soul's longing for God. There is a sense in which it might almost be said that the very sins of the Jew were religious. This is Jacob's legacy to the world. Yet it was not so much Jacob who made the Jew as Abraham, for he more than Jacob was the father of the faithful. Abraham was the real frontiersman of the race. He first went out and knew not whither he was going. He went with God, as the Spaniard would say. Nor was he rushed out like Jacob, who fled from himself and the consequences of his sin to meet God at every turn. Abraham was the first apostle, exalted everywhere in his high calling. He had all the characteristics of the Jew—especially his faith—and even when most cosmopolitan was yet most a Jew. He was a citizen of the world, with his citizenship registered in heaven. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has in his great roll-call of heroes rightly interpreted Abraham. Abraham's glory to this writer was the glory of the Jewish nation. It consisted in the possession of a quality called faith, which revolutionises the whole view of life. Faith is the quality that makes the unseen real. It was here that Abraham drew a sharp line against the men of every other nation. It was here that one of the ultimate tests of life was to be found, and the ultimate tests of life are very few. Abraham set the world into comparative insignificance, though to many it was bursting with importance. All

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that dazzled the eye, even at Sodom, had for him no enchantment. The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, were for him but the fading of an unsubstantial pageant. The lone solitary age in which this man lived had no thought of the unseen, for it was an age of gross materialism and of nameless evils. Apparently Abraham was a fanatic in the cause of religion. He was of those who had seen visions and he was sent forth to realise them. He went out as a little boat on the full tide. He went out prospecting for a city, and he was the first man who ever consciously sought a city of foundations in this fragile world. In this respect he is purely Christian, for he sought what is to be found here whose completeness is there. Abraham, typical of much, is accordingly typical of the soul's search for God. He went by the hard paths of sacrifice and duty, for they are the same. He learned renunciation, which is another word for obedience, for the vision was all-mastering. And he died in faith, having lived in it. His death was only an incident, and death took nothing away from him except his life, which he could well spare, for he had seen Christ's day and was glad, and when his eyes closed for the last sleep he discovered the reality of the city of foundations, which he had all his life been seeking, the city whose builder and maker was God.

It has been said that there is nothing Jewish about Christ. Physically he was Jewish, it is true,

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as the woman at the well of Samaria instantly recognised, but apart from that Christ was the Son of Man. If this is so, however, it does not follow that Christ owed nothing to Judæa or to the Jew. It only follows that Christ had elements in His being that rose above race into the universal.

Yet the Jew gave Him much. Judæa gave Him a "locus," not only nationally but geographically. The soil was prepared. Heredity counts for something in religion as well as in other departments. Timothy starts with something in his favour on account of his ancestry, as well as what he had from a pious home. These things made Paul's ministry possible—and Timothy's. Twenty centuries also had made the Jew the man he was, a man fitted and equipped for receiving and promulgating Christianity.

Much has been written about the Jew theologically. Yet it is not possible to take into account the Jew's contribution to Christ without realising that this contribution was of a religious type. The Jew was an ecclesiastic, which Christ was not. He trembled over with reverence also and an instinct for God. He had received a training which had become part of himself, and just as Jacob had developed to sainthood by devious paths, so the Jewish nation worked its way to a splendid isolation which was more than ecclesiastic, and that fitted it for receiving the Messiah.

One of the first elements in Jewish life in bringing this about was what might be called its

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Separation. Above all nations the Jews have a right to be called a separated people and a separated nation, for they are a nation, though separated still. Their separation from the world began with the founder Abraham at the hands of God. Abraham was driven forth from his own land by unseen hands, and he lived and died on the promises of God. He was promised a nation and a land as his inheritance. This materially he never gained, but potentially he did. As God separated Abraham so He separated Jacob. Abraham died without owning so much ground as a grave, but in Jacob the promise began to shine clear. The story of Jacob is the history of the Jew, the history of a people driven about, buffeted, persecuted, suffering, and in it all growing to be very sure of God. The religious instinct is not developed in a day. It took many centuries to make the Jew of the New Testament, but when he did arrive he was worth waiting for, and he has left his mark deep in history.

This nation, then, eventually found its place in the sun. Yet even then it was a separated place for a separated people. This was God's own peculiar people, shut in by land and sea, enclosed by deserts and bounded by the infinite. This was the training ground of the prophets with their burdens, and monotheism was wrought into the very framework of the Jew. Even though this man lived in the very centre of the world of his day, and his land was a mere highway for

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armies and nations, he never merged into any other nation. His religion was a bar, for it was nothing if not exclusive. A dead wall was around him both nationally and geographically, and his troubles always began whenever he made an alliance with any other people or struck an affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. In other nations, national characteristics melted easily away like a ridge of snow before the April sun, but with the Jew it was not so. Other nations swept over him like clouds of sand from his deserts, but the clouds swept past and left him as he was. Egypt and Assyria, Hittites, Scythians, Persians, Phœnicians, all rushed over his land like raging streams, and in the end came the all-conquering eagles of Rome. The Jew may have given something to them all, but he himself remained comparatively untouched. He had come out from the nations and had become separate. This was in a manner his call. He refused to descend and he refused to blend. If at times he was tempted to turn aside, the prophets recalled him to his high mission and he became as rigid as before. New civilisations and old poured over his territory; his Maritime Plain was cosmopolitan. He stood in the very midst of the current. He was a creature of the separated desert life, and the desert was on his imagination. Armies passed and melted away. He was a child of eternity, and could not pass till his work was done. His eyes were westward on the isles of the sea, and eastward on that desert from which he

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had come and which had made him. All the kingdoms of the world made this country their own, yet in the end it remained distinctively Jewish. Even their language—one of the last possessions of a conquered race—remained fast. They do not seem to have ever lost it. This was certainly a nation. It was more than a race. God's promise was binding. Roman terms were heard on every side. Greek was abundant. Asiatic and Egyptian tongues had been here. Yet the Hebrew tongue continued. A little land, so puny as to be almost insignificant, it had its national features in every village, for it was a land of villages rather than of cities, and this probably because its mission was to reveal the city of foundations, whose builder and maker was God.

The Christian sources describe this land perfectly because they do so unconsciously. Its abundance, its activity, its cosmopolitan atmosphere, its government, its sects, its customs, its religion and rites, are all reflected clearly in the Scriptural record, and there is no compeer of that account. As we read there it becomes evident that no nation ever had so complete a ritual of religion, or one so full of rational significance. It had a priestly code perfectly organised, and, as if that were not enough, it had given to the traditions of the fathers an authority almost as great as that accorded to Moses himself, the Lawgiver, whose authority was supreme. The ritual of this people was full of symbolism, a symbolism at times but faintly under-

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stood and appreciated, yet one so grand that it is hardly possible to believe that the imagination could miss its splendour. In reality it was this religious element that made a line of division between Israel and all other nations, for this nation had developed, even in its follies, a passion for righteousness which no other nation on the face of the earth has ever approached. Nationally, this people was separated for God by God, and its glory lay in the realm of religion. Its past teemed with God, the God who had chosen it and set it apart and revealed Himself to it directly as man to man. This was its glory. This also led to its downfall, for in the end it rejected the fullest revelation God ever gave. But even that must not blind us to the heights to which this people rose. It was a nation which had prophets who were set on fire of God; priests who were the visible agents of God in a religion He had given to them, and to them alone of all the nations on the face of the earth. The religious element in the Jew had been carefully guarded, and while the Samaritan would not receive Jesus, the Jew was expecting Him as the furrow that has been made ready for the seed. So the religious contribution of the Jew to Christ was great, for it had been long preparing, and it was God who contributed it to the Jew.

Not only were the nations of the time of Christ cast into the mould, but the very languages were so dealt with, and such was the confusion that

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there is no general agreement as to either the dialect Christ used or the language in which the narratives of the Gospel were first written. According to some there was a Hebrew original for Matthew ; Mark is supposed to have written in Greek, as also are Luke and John, though some have maintained that there was a Hebrew or Aramaic original for John. There are even some who hold that Mark wrote in Latin. So, without going into the matter or even the evidence, it is clear that the age of Christ was one of transition.

The Jewspoke Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew. The Roman officials spoke Latin, and most people knew and spoke Greek. There is much to be said for Greek and for the knowledge of it. It has strength, beauty, flexibility, and is the language of philosophy. It is not improbable that in the time of Christ it had become the language of the people. It is practically certain that Christ both knew it and used it, though there is little precise proof of the point beyond that probability which is the guide of life. Yet it may also be questioned if there was any common tongue in Palestine at the time of Christ, or any language that was universally used. There was such a mingling of races that it was fitting that the inscription at Calvary should be written in Greek and in Latin and in Hebrew.

The Greek had in a manner invaded Judæa, and there were many Greeks at Pentecost. The very capital of Galilee might appropriately have been called a Greek city. Paul, Peter, Jude, James,

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use Greek not as men who have learned the language after they have grown up. Philip belonged to a town that had become Greek. From the same town came Andrew and Peter. The Greek element was strong in the early Church, as we see from the Book of Acts. If Paul addressed the mob at Jerusalem in Hebrew, it is noted probably as an exception. So Paul may have found it easier to carry his gospel into Greece than into some other parts, and the Isles of Greece were among those that waited for the sunshine of Christ.

Pagan Greece had claimed the realm of thought for its own. Like Wordsworth's blind boy, it was happy in its blindness, or rather its unhappiness was eating at its heart in a vague, undefined manner which it felt but could not explain. Its culture did not give it peace, for culture is of sense, while religion, with its disinterestedness, is of the soul. Greece realised in time in a manner, that there is no culture apart from Christ. Its poets and philosophers represented the immortal truths of life by groping in the dark for the Christ whom they did not see, and Greece crowned the life that is now, crowned it with flowers and danced on the edge of the precipice, because it was consumed with a longing for the Divine. Yet it had no message for the life of its own day. It had many gods because it had no God. The struggling, the unfinished, the commonplace, the weakling, had nothing for it. In the end its speech halted and

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failed, for beauty is not all. It never is all. It may contain the good, but even the oracles of Greece were dumb, because without Christ its beauty was unsanctified.

Rome at that time was a power, a material world-power, as it has always been or as it has always aimed at being. It held its sword against the flood. It helped the gospel by despising and persecuting it. Its force was political. It refused to accept the Gospel, for it could not deny itself. To have accepted the Gospel would have been its doom as a world-power, for then it would have been compelled to put up its sword into the sheath. The doctrine of forgiveness it could not accept. None of the beatitudes appealed to it, for none of them could find a place in Roman Law. Its mission was to conquer, not by twelve legions of angels, but by its eagles gathered together. Like France at a period in its history, it lived on success, and it died by it. Luxury in the end took the place of courage. Rome could conquer the world, but it could not conquer itself. It was the antithesis of Christianity. So it bled to death. Slavery mastered it, statesmanship failed, all its glory faded, for it refused to accept the one thing that would have been the crown of all its glory, and it fell at last like a house of sand on the seashore, swept away by a tide that nothing can stay.

Rome was the epitome of power, yet even power of this kind needs Christ. The Rome of Christ's

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day is a fragment, its empire is a shadow, its greatness is but a name. It glorified the State, and based the State on the sword. But ultimately the sword is not a basis for any State. It is certain that the King of the Jews was too much for Rome. System after system has sought to overcome Him, and to rub out this inscription on the Cross, or to destroy the fact of it. Rome allowed this man to be put to death, and the dead man had His revenge. He still dominates. The little systems that were to destroy Him have long ceased to be. The cry is good enough to be true, "O Galilean, Thou hast conquered."

It is with the Hebrew nation—if with any—that Christ remains identified. This pastoral people, that came into Canaan with its virtues and its vices, left by means of Christ an indelible mark on the world. They were not a speculative people like the Greeks, but were concerned with the problems of practical religion, and they were the most devout people that ever breathed. The milk and honey of Canaan did not save it as a nation, and in the end it became a Roman province. According to the epigram on Syria, its atmosphere was pestilence, its dwellings were straitness, its soil was stone, and its epidemics were everlastingness. It was this nation God chose, and it chose God. Its possession became God. It lived to possess God and to give birth to Christ. In it He was born, within its borders He taught, and by it He was rejected.

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Christ will always be known or remembered as the King of the Jews. He Himself was willing to let the name pass. Still it was He who made the the Jewish creed a religion and vitalised it for more than the Jew. In this He was more than a Jew. Judaism, as such, is but as other creeds without Christ, a fatalism, with a thin streak of morality or asceticism or waiting for death. It is when He comes that we are greater than we know. The Jew had, then, above all a capacity for religion, which is at its best a capacity for God. It is in this sense that Christ is most truly the King of the Jews, for He is thus the King of all who appreciate His truth and His beauty. The distinction between Hellene and Hebrew is very real, but it is obliterated in Christ, for now even the Ethiopian can change his skin. The inscription is written in Greek and in Latin as well as in Hebrew. The coming of Christ Jesus produced a new era whose chief feature is the abolition of all distinctions that seem so vital to us. Henceforward there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

II

The chief contribution of the non-Christian world before Christ came, lay in the state of the world at that time, and in its need of a Saviour. Possibly no one has expressed the

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situation better than Matthew Arnold in his oft-quoted words :

On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell ;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

It has been well said that there is worse than believing in error, and that is to believe in nothing. The writers of the early period depict the life of their age, and its chief feature, according to them, is its depravity. They reveal it as a world without God, without hope, without love, and without law, a world unsanctified and unregenerated by the ideal which afterwards came to it in Christ. It would be unfair to deny to that age either goodness or religion, for the natural man may have both. But its morality was without the approval of Christ. Its order of life was the old order. The courtesan, according to Lecky, was the one free woman in Athens. She lived in boundless luxury. Woman of that day lived, as had always been the custom in the east, in obscurity and seclusion, and she had about her only children and slaves. She was herself as goods and chattels. Among the Jews it was not so, though one of the prayers of the synagogue had it, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a woman." Among the Jews it was considered a duty to marry, and a man unmarried was hardly considered a man ; while he whose wife died " felt the world

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grow dark." Morally among the Jews the woman was considered equal to her husband. No position was too sacred or too great for her to fill. But in pagan life she was practically a slave. She was illiterate. She was watched. The "companion" became more honoured than the lawful wife. Men ceased to reverence their wives, and women reckoned their age by the number of husbands they had divorced. Then Christ came. He gave woman a position. He looked on humanity as comprising man and woman. The New Testament is instructive on the point. Christ talked to woman openly, was ministered to by her and followed by her. He healed her. He offered her his friendship. To Him she was peculiarly sacred. He often spoke of her motherhood, and He honoured His own mother even with His last words. He upheld marriage and desired the bond to be more binding. He believed in one moral law for man and wife. His Church has found in woman its most devoted helper, and to Paul there was neither male nor female. "The female sex, in which antiquity saw nothing but inferiority, which Plato considered intended to do the same things as the male, only not so well, was understood for the first time by Christ."

The outlook on toil was similar to that on woman. Toil was considered degrading except to a slave, who could not be any more degraded than he was. Thought was put before manual

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work to such an extent that for a freeman to work was almost a crime. The slave, having accordingly no opportunity of improving himself, became worse. Stoicism, it is true, did something for him, but in the end it only hardened his heart. Eventually work went out of fashion, and the beggar and the idler were respected. Had the slaves of that day realised their power, master and slave would soon have changed places. When Christ came, the slave eagerly welcomed Him, for Christ had much to give him.

It is interesting to note the attitude of Christianity to slavery. More than any who has ever lived, Christ sanctified toil, the Christ who was born in such a lowly sphere and who was such a toiler. Christ choose freely the life of the worker. He Himself worked with His hands. He too it was who abolished slavery; not by protest so much as by the idea of the brotherhood of man. No revolution took place except in thought. Frequently when examined before a judge the slave said, "I am not a slave, I am a Christian," although this was a man to whom his master did not condescend to speak, for the master, when giving an order, often did it by gesture, lest he should degrade himself by speaking to his slave.

The key-note of Paul in regard to the question was peace, obedience and constitutionalism. Paul almost seemed to believe in the divine right of kings to govern wrongly, but he did not believe

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in the right of one man to another. Yet he almost seemed to allow the system of slavery, or to condone it. Did Christianity then fall to a low ideal in Paul? Did it discourage civic virtues? Is it true, as Lecky says, that "patriotism as a duty has never found any place in Christian ethics"? Are the fires of anarchy never justifiable under Christianity? Well, it would appear that Christ believed that men can live righteously under any social order. Christ never called upon his twelve legions of angels, and never disturbed the existing constitution of His age. Doubtless Paul also knew that the tendency of a new force is to be unduly aggressive. It is so easy for youth to call down fire from heaven, a fire that is often easier kindled than quenched. Neither Christ nor Paul wished for rebellion, revolution, sword, fire or fight. There are various ways of conquering. It may be easy to destroy the pagan State, but the difficulty is to put the Christian in its place. Paul saw divinity in the State as well as in the Church. He believed service was sacred even in a State which was not ideal. So the first thing Paul did for slavery was to accept it. The second was that he transfigured it. The third followed, he abolished it. "The American judge listened attentively to the proofs of ownership (of the runaway slave) but said that he was not convinced that the title was perfect. Counsel asked what more was required. 'Until you bring me a bill of sale from Almighty God you cannot have

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this man.'” Christ was more concerned about reforming human nature than about reforming particular abuses of it. Christ freed the slave by accepting slavery and setting free the heart.

Take again the position of the home before the time of Christ. It has been often pointed out that *familia* in classical Latin means a man's slaves. It was Christ more than any other who made the family, and therefore the home. Before Christ's time a daughter, at marriage, merely passed from one slavery to another. Children in the home were burdens. The pagan had household gods, but no home. The mother was but the chief slave. It is a very different picture that is presented in Jewish life, as any one may see by reading the Old Testament. The mother is there revered and the children are loved. Absalom is a tragedy indeed. The Jew believed in the home and in its influence. Christ sanctified marriage for the Jew, and also sanctified the home. He began His ministry at a marriage. He constantly helped in the difficulties of family life. The nobleman appealed to Him for his child; the widow for her son. At Bethany Christ found a second home; and according to the parable the Prodigal's first impulse was to go to his father. “Go home to thy friends,” says Christ to one. Home is to Christ more than the last relic of Paradise or man's fallen sister. It is to Him the first glimpse of heaven. Christ was taunted with growing up in a humble home.

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He never answered the taunt. Family affection was to Him the indispensable root of Christianity. He brought His Church into the home, and he was never unwilling to enter a home, whether it was that of Zacchæus or Mary or Simon, and His presence made all the difference to it. He also placed the child in the midst of it, that child which is the great problem of to-day. His religion is above all the religion of childhood. If the sound of children's voices is sweet in the home to-day, if their presence makes us glad, we owe it to Christ and the sunshine which He has brought.

Christ has certainly left a very different world from that which existed when He came. Yet this very paganism, which is only touched upon here, and whose darkest side one dare not draw, was itself the strongest need for Him. He answered that need by giving it Himself, for the day was coming when the Samaritan and the Gentile were to realise His influence, and when Greek, barbarian, bond and free, were to find their distinctions melting away, and their hearts and lives being wondrously enriched and renewed by the creator of this new social order.

CHAPTER I

The Wonderful Child

NEARLY two thousand years ago, then, when the world had grown very old and weary, the Wonderful Child was born. This is the story of the wondrous birth, to some incredible, though the signs and circumstances are not out of keeping with the Child Himself. It has been said that a new universe is created every time a child is born. If there are degrees of truth, this saying is especially true of Christ.

So many things fall to be recorded as to the Birth that it is only possible to touch upon them. It is clear that it was a momentous birth, for it is claimed for it that here the Eternal broke into history. For there is this to be considered here that we are now upon historical ground. The historical here has also eternal significance. The story is history; it is the history of the Eternal in human life.

Many forces were set in motion at the birth of Christ. Both wise men and plain gathered round Him as they have done ever since. There had apparently never been any adoration of the child before. This was a new fact for mankind.

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For the first time the child finds a place in life, and many forces conspire concerning this Child. Among others the child becomes a type of the greatest in the kingdom of God. Weakness is glorified. New virtues are emphasised. Family life, innocence, helplessness, responsibility and the home are all sanctified.

Truly a Wonderful Child, for none has so changed the values of life. None has so lit the world with wonder and joy. None has ever so perfected love or life or death. It is from the birth of this Child that the world dates. The world was born afresh with Him. All sides of life were touched by Him to new issues. He has been the renaissance of art, the teacher come from God, the civilisation of the dark nations, the disturbing factor for righteousness, and He has turned the world on its hinges and opened the door into the beauty of the kingdom of God.

This was a Wonderful Child, because He came sent directly from God. He brought with Him more than any other the light of heaven and the beauty of holiness, for He was the express image of God's person. It has been said that God makes man and that then man makes a God. Man could never have made such a God as was revealed to the world in Jesus. This is one of the strongest proofs of the divinity of Christ, and this is the explanation that explains Him. His spiritual beauty was a new thing to the world, and in spite of the limitations that He took upon Himself,

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He always made God shine through Him. This is as true of His death as of His life, for He came not merely to live but to die.

It is true that He was limited by the limitations of earth, and that He was in this sense a limited God, which seems a contradiction in terms. The prophets had not dreamt of Him in this way, though they saw His day and were glad. Their knowledge was so great that it could afford to dispense with much. Yet it was wonderfully accurate. Isaiah's picture is a full-length portrait, and any one who read's Isaiah's account of Him would easily recognise Him, though to Isaiah He was only a dream. Isaiah's account of Him is as common-place indeed as the roses or the leaves or the sunshine, and as impenetrable. For Isaiah lived to write this chapter. It is the gospel of Isaiah. It is in that account that the prophet tells all his heart. This chapter is Isaiah. It is fadeless, and the vision is immortal, like the subject Himself. Here the prophet lays aside his thunderbolts and puts on his singing robes of light as he looks into the mist of dreams. He clothes this figure in the majesty of sorrow, and the picture remains for all time. There are no dates and few details in the account, yet the essentials are all there. For the sun is in Isaiah's face, and the prophet is almost blinded with excess of light. For here Isaiah opened the doors of the infinite and gave the godless, hopeless world a glimpse of God who would come in the

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fulness of time. Isaiah did not know when Christ would come, but there was one fact for whose certainty he would answer with his life, and that was that Christ would come. His chapter is accordingly a challenge. This prophet saw the brook Kedron, and the olive-garden, and the rabble and the Cross and the tomb. He not only saw the problem, but he also saw Christ as the solution of the problem, and then he spoke and sang. He saw God become man, he saw God putting aside the infinite and taking man's place and being despised and rejected of men. This was the gospel of Isaiah. At the heart of it was a God who suffered and died as a man, and therefore it may be claimed for him that in his gospel he included the Incarnation.

David saw him too. It is an inexplicable vision in its own way in his case, for there are no circumstances in David's life to account for this vision, unless in the death of Absalom his son. Yet he wrote the words Christ quoted on the Cross. He described the very death of the Sufferer, the scorn of those who passed by, the shaking of the head, the parting of the garments, the piercing of the hands and feet, the thirst of the dying Saviour. And in that Saviour's lips he puts no confession of sin or of remorse, and no penitence. It is accordingly David's own cry. This is how David called Him Lord. This, too, is why this Psalm was sung in the North African congregations at Easter celebration of the Supper.

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More than fourteen centuries have passed since the Vandals quenched these songs in blood, but the same strain is still to be heard in Scottish churches on a Communion Sabbath, for in it David saw Christ.

This is the key to the birth of Christ, the Christ who came to save the world, who came not to preach the Gospel, but that there might be a gospel to preach. For it was He who came to make and to give a gospel, bringing eternity into time with Him, bringing heaven with Him, for heaven is here or nowhere. It may almost be said of this Child that He has no memorial or monument of His life except Christianity. The places which were once identified with Him are to-day indistinguishable. The New Testament is only a fragment, but as long as the heart lives His Gospel will not die.

As we look at the birth register we see that there are in the New Testament four portraits of Christ. These are all taken from different angles. The story is told without rhetoric, yet it is never indelicate or inconsistent. It is a memorial rather than a biography. There are many gaps in it, indeed it consists largely of gaps and blanks, and it is from a human point of view almost an incredible tale. Yet no law of heredity is broken in it, for this is the story of the Second Man, the Man from heaven. He was born in "the House of Bread among the corn-fields," and Jerusalem first knew the story from strangers.

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But Bethlehem, though an insignificant town, had memories. David's father belonged to it, and from its well David had longed to drink.

Matthew's record is the Jew's. It belongs to the man of the past. The Jew had Abraham to his father. He was of a conquered people, and though he was a child of eternity he was also the child of tradition and of a religious exclusiveness that defied the world. Matthew was himself above all a Jew. He was steeped to the fingertips in Jewish tradition and it is all there in his gospel.

Mark's gospel is that of the eye-witness. He wrote in all probability earlier than any of the other writers, and he wrote as much for the Roman as for the Jew. His narrative is the first epistle to the Romans, and in this respect he is the forerunner of Paul. More than the other evangelists he had the seeing eye and he delighted in detail. It may almost be said that though his is the shortest gospel it contains most, and Mark is not so much the interpreter of Peter as the interpreter of Christ.

Luke wrote for the Greek or for the Gentile. Whether Luke was a physician or not, he was certainly a painter, and he has painted many exquisite pictures. His pictures are for all lovers of God. While Matthew gives the teaching and discourses of Christ, Mark the actions and John the philosophy, Luke gives the sayings of Christ. His gospel is "the gospel of the nations, full of

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mercy and hope assured to a whole world by the love of a suffering Saviour." It is "the gospel of the saintly life, the gospel of the Greeks, the gospel of the future, the gospel of Christianity and of its universality and gratuitousness, the historic gospel, the gospel of Jesus as the Good Physician and the Saviour of mankind."

It is Luke who tells every stage of Christ's life ; Christ as a babe, as a child, as a boy, as a man. It is he who tells of the poverty of the family and of what Christ did for woman. Luke is the most human of the Evangelists. He strikes the human note more freely than any of the other writers. In his pages are the cries of the bereaved, the poor, the outcast and the heathen. He has much light on the times and on the conditions of the age. It is he who gives information as to the forerunner of Christ and regarding the various sects of the day. It may be said of him that while he writes the gospel of the infancy and of the brotherhood of man he has no genealogy of Christ. It is Luke who tells the story of Mary.

Now while John's narrative is to all who are one in Christ Jesus, and while John makes Christ the Word or the Thought or the Expression of God, Luke's derivation by the Virgin Birth is at once sublime and to many incredible. It is certainly a unique relationship that is here described. Yet all the New Testament writers bear witness to the divinity of Christ, and none contradict it. Matthew and Luke tell of it, and

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Mark and John imply it, while Paul tells us that Christ was "born of a woman." This is apparently a miracle if ever there was one. But there is nothing strange or at least incredible in miracle if we believe in God to begin with. A miracle to such is only God working in what is unknowable to us, and it would indeed be a miracle, as has been said, if there were no miracles. Yet it is very daring for a writer to maintain that a woman gave birth to the Son of God. It is also just possible that no forger would write so. Matthew and Luke were quite explicit on the point. They maintain that Joseph was not the father of Christ, that Mary was a virgin when Christ was born, and that Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. According to them Christ was not sinless because He was born so, but because He came direct from God with a sinless nature. Elsewhere in the New Testament the story is not told, but it is never denied, and it is everywhere assumed. Christ Himself says nothing explicitly of this miracle, but all His teaching assumes it also, and He claims to be of the nature which is the result of this birth. We should perhaps hardly expect Christ to speak explicitly of the birth itself, for the people were not very willing to believe in miracle, and this was in itself a stupendous miracle. We know that even His "brethren" did not accept Him as the Son of God, and that Mary pondered much in her heart. This was accordingly a fact which

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probably was not generally admitted in the lifetime of Christ, for it was not to be expected that Christ's family would say anything about it. Yet Paul knew it, and Joseph was given a divine revelation against any suspicions he might feel inclined to harbour. The evidence, therefore, in favour of the birth is fairly clear, however it may be disputed, and this is only the evidence as to the story itself.

The story of the birth is variously told, but it cannot be said that there is any real contradiction. According to Matthew, the Wise Men brought their gifts, and so from the first the Gentiles sought Him. Their interest and inquiry were awakened. They said they had seen His star. Even at His birth Christ could not be hid. These men came to worship, as wise men should. They also worshipped by bringing their gifts, for that is an essential part of worship. These were the first gifts Christ got on earth, and He had many strange gifts before He died. These men brought their tribute to their King, their prayers as incense, and their spices as a symbol of their anointing Him who was about to die.

They were all looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high ;
Thou cam'st a little baby thing,
That made a woman cry.

O Son of Man, to right my lot,
Naught but Thy presence can avail ;
Yet on the road Thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea Thy sail.

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My "how" or "when" Thou wilt not heed,
But come down Thine own secret stair,
That Thou may'st answer all my need,
Yea, every bygone prayer.

The Birth of Christ was an epoch in the history of the world. It gave childhood its chance and showed also that no home was too poor to be religious. In reality of course there is only one great difficulty in religion, and that is to be religious. The world has learnt, then, from this incident the duty of searching for the Christ and for the child, and the duty and joy of seeking the childlike life. It is also beginning to see that the child is very near to Jesus, who was Himself the Holy Child, and who retained the beauty of that time through the troubled years that brought such pain. For just as there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn, there has always been a tendency to crowd the child out of life. The toiler has no room for Him, the rich has no room. He has no real home for Himself on earth unless a Mary or a Martha finds room for Him at Bethany. He has to borrow disciples as He has to borrow a cradle. He has to borrow a shroud as He has to borrow a grave. All through His earthly life He has to borrow human help. He is crowded out at the inn and out of society and out of religion and out of the church of His day, and at last out of life itself. Yet He demands room and yet there is room. He is content it may be to forgo these things so far as they are external,

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and to find room for himself in the heart and in thought and in experience, knowing that the time must come when neither society nor religion nor labour nor home nor life in any department can do without Him. For He knows that He will one day dominate all things, and that His pierced hands will one day be extended over a world that is His own.

CHAPTER II

The Boyhood of Jesus

THE record of the boyhood of Jesus is almost a blank. A very short chapter would contain all that is told of Christ as a boy, and it is possible that the Evangelists had neither wish nor opportunity to write much on the subject. They were, for one thing, much more concerned about Christ's manhood than about His boyhood, and it is also feasible that their information as to His boyhood was scanty. In all likelihood the boyhood of Jesus was as uneventful as the scholar's life. He would be known as Joseph's son, a zealous student and a careful toiler. For the rest, silence. It may almost be argued for a certainty that He was not known by those about Him, and He would not be understood, for He was not understood even by Joseph and Mary when they found Him in the temple.

Yet even then He was identified with the House of God. He was found there, where, when quite an infant, He had been dedicated to the Lord. It was in the temple too that Christ founded the New Church. He was found in the midst of the Rabbis, both hearing them and asking them

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questions. The old ritual died that day. A new wonder had arisen, a new subject indeed, as well as a new teacher. Mary said, "Thy father and I," but Christ said "My Father's business." He seemed to say, "Where do you expect to find Me if not in my Father's house?" This is the record of the divine Sonship. Heavenly wisdom was here in person in the temple, and when it came it dealt with the Scriptures. Even at this early age Christ was intensely interested in the Scriptures in which He was destined later to play so large a part, and He was already to be found in the Scriptures of His time by the eyes that could see Him. Like Moses and Samuel, His mind turned towards holy things early. He was eager to learn. His spirituality was native and unforced. His bent and individuality were asserting themselves. His originality was beginning to find outlet for itself, and the foundation of that knowledge was being laid which later on was to be both a problem and a refuge for mankind. His increase in wisdom was not wholly apart from His religious enthusiasm. The temple, of course, was the religious centre of the nation. All the time it was at the heart of the Jew, and at the age of twelve He was beginning to be interested in religious affairs and to take part in them. It was at this time, then, when boyhood had really come, that Christ gave to His parents the incomprehensible answer which was the expression of a unique religious life. Yet He required no teacher,

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for all springs flowed for Him. Doubtless at this early age He was beginning to recognise His mission, a mission whose consciousness grew upon Him till it became a realisation and a certainty of his soul. At twelve it is evident He had begun to know. The story is most probably given to mark the first hour of the dawn. The development had begun; He had also a self-consciousness of which His birth would confirm Him. But the call had not yet come for Him. He waited, and the call came.

In that little Nazareth, the white city on the hill, in that despised Nazareth He grew, for if Judæa gave Him a cross, Galilee gave Him a home. And though His brothers rejected His claim and sneered at Him, and once even tried to lay hands on Him, He had a happy boyhood. In His home there would be few luxuries, or none, but the Jewish father would not neglect the education of his child. Luther, we are told, was haunted all his days by the memory of the harsh discipline of his boyhood, and he never said his "Paternoster" without a shudder. But Joseph, if he was poor, was a good man and a good Jew, and the good Jew believed that "the world exists by the breath of school children."

Joseph probably had a copy of the Law, though in those days it was not in every home. But the good Jew made an effort to have it, and he made sacrifices to keep it. It was his duty to teach its precepts diligently to his children. At the age of

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six or seven Christ would be sent to the House of the Book, the little school attached to the synagogue of every village. Thereafter He should have gone to the school taught by the Rabbis, but instead of doing so, He would go into the carpenter's shop to help to shape the ploughs and yokes of which He afterwards spoke. He did, as we have seen, once sit at the feet of Rabbis and they at His. "Therefore let us that are teachers fear, recognising that in our midst is the Christ attending how we teach." These were the years of preparation and of pupilage, the silent years of Nazareth during which Christ was "making Himself." To the people of that town He was doubtless one of themselves. They saw nothing extraordinary in Him. Thus were years of strenuous toil passed through by which Christ came more fully into contact with the toiling and the industrious and the poor who make up so much of the world. No wonder the crowd heard Him gladly, for He came very near it in the identity of interests in the material things of life.

Very dear the Cross of shame,
Where He took the sinner's blame,
And the tomb wherein the Saviour lay,
Until the third day came;
But He bore the self-same load,
And He went the same high road,
When the Carpenter of Nazareth
Made common things for God.

Christ was not isolated in Nazareth, for even there a great cosmopolitanism flowed like a

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refreshing stream. Here He learned the Law and He got the training of the home. It is probable that Joseph died early, for no mention of him is made after the story of Christ being found in the temple. In any case, he falls into the background, just as Mary does. But during all these early years Christ was meditating and learning. He learned His trade, and He was at home in the world of common life later on. If He had no other advantages He had the advantage of being poor, and though that may not always seem an advantage, it frequently is so. It is true that this hindered Him from being sent to any superior school, but it did not hinder Him from knowing both the Law and life itself. In the synagogue at Nazareth He learned to read the Scriptures, and He became a "scribe." He learned to write, and to speak in public. He probably spoke Aramaic, and He knew Greek and in all likelihood Latin.

It was here that He developed, at any rate. He became the Man of the New Age with a new religion. Nature unfolded much to Him. He saw the lily of the field in all its profusion and beauty, the hen and her chickens at the roadside, the shepherd on the hills, the fox, the sheep, the children and their games, castles, courts, the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, the sower, the labourers in the vineyard, and His quick eye took in all the deeper meanings of life that lay beneath. There

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never was such an interpretation of life because there never was such an interpreter. For He not only saw human life here ; He interpreted it in the terms of God, and He was an optimist, as most lovers of nature are. Doubtless here, too, He was much alone. He loved the village life for some things, especially its solitude and the scope which it gave for meditation. Away in open spaces and quiet glades He found His soul, and His days were a prayer. He loved the quiet life as most men do who are driven into a public career. It was one of His dear possessions, for it brought Him very near to God. Here He recruited and rested and refreshed His soul. He loved to turn towards God there in those silent years. Character, if it is tested and strained in publicity, is developed and made in meditation and quiet. Here therefore, though a Galilean towards Nature, He became a Jew in religious earnestness, and an Israelite towards God. It was here that He grew to know Himself. A moral development took place which made Him conscious of His own powers, His own heart and its capabilities and virtues. This doubtless was the period of introspection. He cultivated holiness, purity, strength of will, depth of knowledge ; and attained a deep consciousness of God. Here it may be said He attained the Inner Life. All sources ministered to it. He saw the love of God everywhere, in the fowls of the air, the grass of the field, the falling rain and the shining sun. Here

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too He came into contact with all types. From the Pharisee He learned of their traditions and rules, for the Pharisees were the Puritans and precisians of their age. He took note of their authority, their Stoicism, their frugality, their ostentation and form, their views of clean and unclean, of angels, demons, spirits and a resurrection. He saw their zeal for the Law and for holiness, and much of their teaching He cast from Him, for He had no room for it either in His theology or in His soul. He saw also the Sadducees and learned from them. Their beliefs had little for Him, however, for they believed in no resurrection, though they put aside tradition and accepted the Pentateuch. Still they believed in freedom of the will, which was much. Their political aspect He would not consider. From the Essenes He took His love of solitude and love for the brethren, and He took their prophetic mysticism, for according to John, Christ was not only a prophet but a mystic as well. It has to be said, however, that while all sects contributed to His development He was the follower of none. Legalism, literalism, the letter that killeth, He could not away with. He needed no teacher, since all things taught Him. Had He become of a sect He would not have been the Christ, the universal teacher of man.

It is clear that His early years made Him proficient in the Scriptures. Whether He

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accepted the whole Scriptures of His day or not as being verbally inspired, He quoted them as if they were, possibly as He did other things, on the ground of accommodation. In this way He spoke of Moses and of Isaiah, and of Jonah and of Daniel, and of David and his Psalms. His knowledge of Moses and of Jewish ritual was wide and accurate and deep. He not only knew of sacrifice and of the temple and of priestly rite and of the Sabbath and tithe, but He seemed to know all about them from the inside. He lit up everything with spiritual meaning and gave everything a new significance. This no other except the prophets had done. He too was a prophet and the greatest of them. For Him the past was alive and breathing. The men of old, the heroes of the Jewish faith, were all alive for Him. The prophets were very real to Him. His favourite saying was from one of the prophets, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

However He may have accepted the Old Testament, to Him it was substantially true. The prophets were to Him full of majesty. With them He dipped into the future and saw the glowing beauty of the kingdom of God. His style of teaching indeed owed much to the prophets, for it was prophetic. He did not argue; He asserted, bringing together things far apart. An epigram sufficed to clinch the matter. On all that He touched He cast new

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light. He made the sayings of old quite new. In His nature He had a sharp contrast and a harmony, for though He was a zealot and "had a devil" He was meek and lowly in heart. In His teaching He had gained the ideal, just as in His life. In every aspect of the truth He had greatness. As an orator, poet, philosopher, statesman, theologian, artist, He was perfect. He had a perfection of touch in all that He said or did. But especially was He the man of religion. Before Him the arguments of men collapsed, yet not by argument on His part, for He spoke straight to the heart in direct, simple, lofty teaching which showed forth God. His words brought to men a great joy, for that was what He had in His own heart. There in the recesses of Galilee He gradually grew to a full knowledge of His mission. The contrast between God's message and the life around Him deepened into certainty, a certainty that lay in His soul. So at last the hour struck. The call came for which He had fitted Himself and laboured and prayed. He had fought hitherto within Himself and hoped and feared. Then the light broke and He stepped into it. It was a long preparation for a short ministry, but it was a ministry that was worth it in its effect on the world.

In appearance He has been looked upon as without beauty, though we have little to go upon in this. Those who have looked upon Him in this way have based their assumption

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on the words of Isaiah and of David, which after all may have been to some extent hyperbolical and of the east. Pictures of Him existed on gems showing Him crowned with wreaths. In the third century such pictures had found their way into chapels. Then as time went on He was made out to be beautiful, to be indeed the fairest among the sons of men. "He was very fair to behold," says Nicephorus. "His stature was full seven spans. His hair was fair and not very thick slightly tending to curl; His eyebrows however were black and curved, His eyes bright and with a dash of yellow, the nose prominent, the beard yellow and not reaching far down. He wore the hair of His head long, for neither scissors nor the hand of man ever came upon His head, except only the hand of His mother when He was quite a child. He stooped somewhat in His gait, walking not quite erect. His complexion was of the hue of wheat, His face not round, but oval like that of His mother, and only slightly ruddy. Dignity and intelligence, gentleness and freedom from all passions, are therein expressed."

Lentulus makes Him tall and venerable; His hair curled and crisp, very dark and brilliant, falling from His shoulders in waves and parted in the middle after the manner of the Nazarenes. According to him the forehead was open, the face unwrinkled and beautiful, the beard dark. The same writer makes Him "awful in rebuke, mild in exhorta-

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tion ; none ever saw Him laugh but often weep." We know that He looked older than His age, for He was said to be not yet fifty when He was only fully thirty. We know that He was manly and prophetic, that His eye, His word, His voice, seized and shook the hearer. Men and women, even the children, the sick, the poor, felt happy at His presence. He had a magnetic power in His vitality and freshness, His vigour, His outlook on life and on God. He had restless energy, as His ministry shows, and His short, crowded years of labour must have made an immense strain upon Him, for He could not get rest. He must often have been utterly exhausted by the strain, and this may give confirmation to the idea that in the Garden He feared He might die before accomplishing His work.

For all this undertaking His consecrated youth had fitted Him. He did then the duty that lay nearest Him, though it is possible that He did not see what was to come. As a son He learned even then obedience and reverence for God. So He fitted Himself for God's work. So He waited—which is generally the hardest work to some natures—and so He fulfilled all righteousness, and died and made Himself the Saviour of all who believe in Him.

CHAPTER III

The Word Made Flesh

ACCORDING to the New Testament writers God became man in Christ. The Synoptics tell us so, and John agrees with them. So does Paul, and the writer of Hebrews is quite explicit on the point also. There is indeed no contradiction of the fact in the New Testament. Christ Himself, more especially according to John, insisted upon His divine origin. Christ was born of Mary, though He had no human father. It was a very extraordinary entrance to humanity, but we are in the realm of the spiritual here, dealing with the work of God and of the Holy Spirit.

The Incarnation is therefore surely not impossible as a fact. It is only an assumption that God and man are kept apart by essential differences of nature, while on the other hand it is clearly set forth that man was originally made in the image of God. This likeness to God is a spiritual one, the difference being between the finite and the infinite. Surely, then, there was no impossibility in God becoming man. He could take upon Himself the limitations of man, for God limited would be man. God was able to

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do this because He was God. Man was able to receive Him the perfect Man. The difference between God and man is for one thing the difference between an unlimited personality and one which is limited. Paul's idea of God becoming man is that God limited Himself. He tells us that God "emptied Himself" in Christ. The result of the Incarnation, therefore, was Jesus Christ.

The Incarnation, then, produced God as Man, not one with two consciousnesses or two wills, but a single personality which was unique in so far as it was human and also divine. Scripture in its portraits of Christ makes the fact clear. The physical body, human feelings and desires, the capacity for suffering, are all on the plane of the human. He showed also a conformity to the laws of growth and knowledge. This combination of natures was not such that at one time Christ was human and at another time divine. He grew as a boy, and grew to a consciousness of His divine nature. His divinity was enclosed in human limits and in a human frame. No longer like unto His Father in this, He was made like unto His brethren. Yet His divinity is as clearly attested as His humanity, or as any other fact in history. There is no explanation of Christ if He is not divine. Neither imposture nor self-delusion can explain Him. He breaks the order of the race. He is not of Adam. He is the Second Man. He is from heaven.

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Christ distinctly claimed to represent man, though He came from heaven, and it is clear that His claim is valid. No one has ever been so representative of man as Jesus Christ, who called Himself the Son of Man. He is more divine and more human than any, if the words can be so used, for the true nature both of God and of Man finds in Him perfect expression. He lived sinless among the sinful. He showed that man is in the image of God ; that evil is not one thing to man and another thing to God ; and by His sinlessness He convicted sin itself. His life is in strong contrast to the life of all others. " No one convicted Him of sin, nor did He convict Himself of it." His sympathy for man had a divine quality in it which doubtless goes far to explain His miracles. The heart of Christ was infinitely tender to the touch. Evil appealed to Him as it never has appealed to any other, and any one who maintains otherwise must be prepared to extend the same argument to God. No one ever had so keen a sense of the world's sin or need, because no one ever lived so near God the all-pure. John calls Him the Logos, or the Word of God, the expression of God's being and nature. Also John is thinking of the Word as the power, the intelligence, the will of God in expression. John has shown Him to us as a tabernacle which is human, with an indwelling Presence which is divine.

The Incarnation as an event hinges upon the

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fact of sin, and upon the view of God. If we deny the fact of sin in man, if we believe that sin has no effect on God, then it may be quite consistent on our part to deny the need for any Incarnation. But when these facts are granted, God's scheme makes itself plain. Man has a craving to know God, and he has also a craving for pardon and peace. The Incarnation is God's answer to these desires on the part of man.

It was also part of God's scheme for bringing about reconciliation, for when there was no other hope of a Saviour, God gave Himself in His own Son. The Incarnation accordingly had its origin in the heart of God, the God who is so full of love for His children, and it bears all the marks of God both in its conception and in its results. There is not only nothing inconsistent in the Incarnation with the character of God, but there is everything that might be expected to testify to God as we suppose Him to be. No one can read Luke's story without feeling that a story of this kind was beyond human invention. It has, it is true, its mystery, but its mystery need not hinder its acceptance. We see in the story of the Incarnation the sacrifice of God. It is not possible that we should be able to understand how great was such a sacrifice, for the taking of flesh entailed all that followed in the life of Christ. But the whole idea is consistent. It is characteristic of the God who trained Israel and who loves all. It was the realisation of the

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beginning of God's purpose in history. It was a necessary step in the history of salvation in "the fulness of the time." It may also be said that the very idea of the Incarnation was involved in the creation of man. It is this story of the coming of Christ, the Son of God in the flesh, "that constitutes the sum and substance of the New Testament." It is because we have a full revelation of God in Christ that there have been no more manifestations of God in this way. This Son of God is to the Evangelists the sum of the Old Testament in Himself, the fulfilment of all type and prophecy, and the Son of the living God.

John in his gospel gives the interpretation of Christ as the Son of God. His gospel is not so much a portrayal as an interpretation of the high majesty and the glory which Christ has brought to earth from heaven. The incidents are there transfigured by the light of this Christ, and the gospel of John is accordingly one of spiritual knowledge. John has no theory as to the Incarnation except that God took flesh without ceasing to be eternal. Christ is the divine Logos in the flesh, not a natural man who has become God. All Christ's earthly doings are therefore recorded in the light of heaven, and bathed in it, because Christ is of the Father, and He and the Father are one.

The Synoptics see Him as a man gradually working out His development to the Messianic consciousness and the glory in which during

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His work on earth He moves and has His being. On this point, as on others, the Synoptics and John are supplementary to each other. Christ is to them as to John, sinless, not because He is born of Mary, but because He is born of God, for none of the writers suggest that the Virgin is sinless. If Mark and John have not told her story, it is most likely we have her account in Luke, and possibly partly in Matthew, while Mark and John may not have felt that her story came within the limits they had set for their gospel. All seemed agreed that it was consistent with what they had believed of Christ, miraculous as it was, and mysterious as it was, for none of the writers give any authority for the view that Christ was born with a human nature merely, a nature which was gradually sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost. The Incarnation may indeed be but the "fitting accompaniment of the union between God and man, and, so to speak, the natural expression of it in the order of outward facts." Christ Himself claims pre-existence in His being. He ascribes to Himself in His own person a particular significance, "Whom say men that I the Son of Man am?" He has in Himself something transcendent and superhuman in the way of personality, and He freely appropriates the messages of the past as relating to Himself. Mystery in Him there may be, but whatever explanation of Him exists, it is to be found here. It is because He is the Son

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of God and the Son of Man that there is a special significance about His work. He is the fulness of the revelation of God.

The object of the Incarnation was that Christ might become man, and so, as God and man—the God-Man—become the Saviour of the world. Well might the multitude of the heavenly host sing praise to God over the fields of Bethlehem, for this Child was indeed set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The fulness of time had truly come “and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth ! ”

CHAPTER IV

The Divine and the Human

I

IT is clear that even at the age of twelve Christ was beginning to experience the dawn of His life-work. Though at that time He was but a boy, His mission was already taking shape in His mind. "Wist ye not," He said, "that I must be about My Father's business?" This divine consciousness in Christ kept Him back, however, till He was ready to take up His ministry, and this although He was always divine. For the other alternative is that He was only human till He attained the age of thirty, and that then He became divine, thus being divine as well as human for three years. If then it is asked why Christ did not manifest His divine nature before His ministry began, it may be replied that He did. He manifested it in preparing for His life-work. It is as divine at times to wait as it is to work. The ideal life is not necessarily full of work, however noble work in itself may be, but even if work is a necessary attribute of Christ's divinity, then in those early years Christ was a strenuous toiler. At twelve His nature was

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beginning to reveal its bent. There is a latent consciousness in all men, so much so that we do not know exactly what we are. We have hints and shadowings as we move about in worlds not realised ; and the ultimate development of the mind leads us to know ourselves, for now we see through a glass but darkly. It is true that this consciousness manifests itself most publicly in the public ministry of Christ, and to this Christ came at last. Yet even He had a moral development in His life, or His Temptation meant nothing to Him. Now His Temptation—and He must have told the story of it Himself—was a reality. It was a temptation. He was tempted on all sides of His nature, and His nature was man's nature, everything of man except sin. He was subject to hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, pain. He had also the liability to sin, though He remained sinless. It is not sufficient to suppose that Christ had the onset but not the pain of the passion. According to Hilary, His miraculous birth was sinlessness. He had a body free from sin because conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. There was not in Christ, he said, the flesh of sin. In this respect Christ might have been compared to a man under the power of chloroform, laid asleep in body and thus becoming a living soul.

Yet even the disciples of Christ saw that He acted voluntarily. Peter tried to dissuade Him from going forward to death, for he saw that

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Christ could save Himself. Christ Himself prayed that "this cup might pass" from Him. The difficulty no doubt here is that if Christ had man's unfallen nature how could He be liable to sin, and how could temptation have any meaning for Him, or any sting against Him? The same argument might have been applied to Adam, the first man. It is evident that as Christ grew bodily He *learned* obedience.

It is also clear that Christ challenged anyone to convince Him of sin. His sinlessness, according to Ullman, is the pledge of the truth of His doctrine. Christ aims to prove the truth of His doctrine. His knowledge was omniscience, and in regard to it He was infallible. That was partly why He spoke as one having authority. His words were the words of eternal life. His words were in unison with His personality. Only one perfectly sinless could have spoken as He spoke. All nature was at His service. All life was in His teaching. His body was indeed the temple of the Holy Ghost. He was the Perfect Man, the Son of Man rather than a man. He had a miraculous power, and was Himself a miracle, as was also the purity of His life. Death had no connection for Him through sin as it has for us. If He suffered death it was not for His own sin, or even for inherited sin, for He had no sin and He inherited none. Only by becoming man was death possible for Him. "In this sense His resurrection stands in the

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very closest connection with His freedom from sin." He was indeed the Holy One of God. Christ was therefore Himself the central point of His own work of redemption. His great subject, the Kingdom of God, was inextricably bound up with Himself. His subject was such that it was impossible to separate it from Him. God was His Father and He is our Father, but God is not our Father as He was Christ's. This is why Christ spoke of "My Father and your Father, My God and your God." Christ's life also has all the evidence of divinity. His originality was more than human. His independence was more than human. His love was love at the height. His holiness was not attained by Him. Was all this accidental then? Far from it. It was divine. Christ was the express image of God's Person. The Person of Jesus was the revelation of God.

Born as a child, Christ developed in a world of sin. Surely here is something mysterious and incomprehensible that such a one should be stainless even in the early stages of life. This could only be true of a nature that was sinless from the first. The divine care was upon Him, or rather the divine nature or principle was within. The human nature in Christ was accordingly "pervaded, animated and energised by a divine principle." He was sinless and the second Adam, and being sinless, it was in this state He grew, though being man He was liable to sin.

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Naturally one may be inclined to question the unity of such a nature. If so, the one dominating and reconciling fact is that of personality. Christ's manhood as explained by Liddon is not of itself an individual being. It is not a seat and centre of personality. "Thus to speak of Christ as a man at least without explanation may lead to a serious misconception ; He is The Man, or rather Man."

At any rate Christ did not make Himself a double being by becoming man. Just as the human body does not exclude the unity of man, so was it with Christ. Man is not a duality made up of soul and body. He is one, a unity, a living personality. It may be true that we do not know life or personal existence apart from the body, but the body does not add a second personality. It blends with the soul in making the personality we have. Man is at least soul and body, but yet he is one. So Christ lived, and so He and the Father were one. The taking of a human will did not destroy the personality of Christ, for His human will was in harmony with the divine. Christ could not will what was evil, for that was to Him morally impossible. So the mystery that was in Christ is a mystery that is in every man the mystery of duality in unity.

Luke tells us that Christ grew in wisdom and in stature, that is, He grew after a human fashion. There was a rational human development because

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there was potential manhood and a rational human soul. To be alive is, humanly speaking, to have, among other qualities, the capacity for growth. His body grew, and so did His mind. If Luke also tells us that He was filled with wisdom, the two statements are not necessarily contradictory. The question of course will be instantly raised as to the knowledge of Christ whenever this is said. Was Christ omniscient then, or did His mind grow as the minds of the young do grow? Was His knowledge limited, or did He know all things with a knowledge that was infallible? If Christ had an intellectual development, what was the nature of it?

On one point Christ confessed His ignorance. He confessed in regard to the Day of Judgment that of that day and hour no man knew, "no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Was Christ as God ignorant then on this point, or was He ignorant as man? Was it a special point, or may there have been other things of which He was equally ignorant? There has been much reasoning as to this. It is clear that Christ here leaves the matter in the Father's hands. The Father as the Creator shall say when that day shall be. Here also Christ as the Son has learned obedience. As God Christ knew when that day would be, but He humiliated Himself by love to the Father. If we admit that there were even times when the Saviour's knowledge was limited, that implies

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nothing except that He chose to limit Himself. He had a superhuman knowledge, as His ministry showed. The coin in the fish's mouth, Nathanael under the fig-tree, the finding of the ass for His entry into Jerusalem, and many more incidents all testify to that. "Thou knowest all things," said Peter. The knowledge in the human soul of Christ was nothing if not omniscience. It has also to be remembered, as has been pointed out, that a limitation of knowledge is one thing and a liability to error is quite another. "Infallibility," according to Liddon, "does not imply omniscience any more than limited knowledge implies error. Infallibility may be conferred on a human teacher with very limited knowledge by a special endowment preserving him from error. When we say that a teacher is infallible we do not mean that his knowledge is encyclopædic, but merely that when he does teach he is incapable of propounding as truth that which in point of fact is not true."

Did Christ, then, teach what was not true? Was His knowledge limited to the point of error? If Christ's knowledge was complete, did He ever allow quotations from books which He knew to be practically forgeries, or was it that His knowledge was so limited that He quoted ignorant of the fact that the books from which He quoted were not trustworthy? Is He, then, if so, a trustworthy authority Himself? "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" has been rendered

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also, "Which of you convinceth Me of failure, deception, error?" for He also said, "And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?"

Christ accordingly, one may rationally suppose, based His claim morally on this fact among others, that He bore witness to the truth. The first point to be proved is, then, that Christ did maintain the trustworthiness of sources or authorship that could not bear the light. Did Christ quote as authoritative, authors who were spurious? That, to begin with, has hardly been proved yet. Even when that is conclusively proved, if it ever is, there is still this to be maintained, that Christ may hold a general acceptance of the writers and found on them; first, because they are generally accepted in their generation; second, because He is unwilling to give offence to the believers of His age; and third, because it may not be vital to the truth which He wishes to teach whether the statement has been quoted by the authority brought forward, or whether it has been credited to him only. Of one thing we may be certain: Christ does not wilfully deceive, nor could He. This infallibility of Christ was not so much a gift as an original and necessary endowment of the higher nature. The matter therefore narrows itself down to a choice as to the acceptance of the evidence regarding Christ on the one hand, or as to the dicta of scholars on the other. For the contention of scholars is that Christ did quote books which He knew to be of no

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genuine authority. When the matter is presented in this way we have no difficulty in deciding.

But, it may be urged, may not Christ have been infallible as the Son of God, and fallible as the Son of Man? If He grew in wisdom, as Luke maintains, may not His knowledge have been in some respects imperfect, and therefore fallible? Here again it has to be pointed out that while Christ had a human body with its limitations—except sin—He was One. His line of least resistance was through the mind not of the acute critic, but through the mind of the man who was willing to be a believer in the truth of God. In this He was the Son of God. It is not possible to believe that He was divine and infallible in one set of faculties and human and fallible in another. When Luke tells us that He increased in wisdom and in stature Luke is doubtless thinking of His human aspect, and recording for us the fact that though He afterwards showed His knowledge to be infallible and divine, yet as a youth growing up in Nazareth He fulfilled the ordinary laws of growth as youth does. It is confusion on this point which originated the idea that Christ became divine at His baptism, when in reality there was only a confirmation and manifestation of the Holy Spirit to Him then. If Christ wilfully erred or wilfully taught error, then His claim to divinity must lapse. But Luke's statement is not contradictory to the idea that He was always divine: it is supplementary and

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explanatory of it, for Luke also states previously that the child Jesus was "filled with wisdom," while John holds that He was "full of truth." This was indeed a part of His likeness to God, God who cannot lie. Christ grew into truth, having "emptied Himself," and taken upon Himself the form of a servant. He was willing to grow into truth to verify it, but it does not follow that He was then destitute of either divinity or infallibility. It is questionable if it even follows that His knowledge was limited, save that He was willing to limit Himself as a man, for it might only imply that His hour had not come.

It is clear, however, that Christ came under the limitations of man, "of faith and temporal being." It is of no use to explain or to attempt to explain such limitations by explaining them away. Christ had all the human attributes. He marvelled at unbelief when He found it, and He marvelled at faith. He expressed surprise at times, and once He expressed ignorance. His knowledge was that of the human heart, and His power was from the Father.

The question has been raised as to "how it was that our Lord, endowed with the supernatural powers which He exhibited during the three years of His ministry, attracted no notice during the eighteen years of His obscurity at Nazareth," and the answer is given that He did not then possess these supernatural powers (Professor David Smith). With that view

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many will agree, for, while it does not imply a Docetic theory, it shows that God was with Christ endowing Him specially for the work given Him to do. Christ referred His gifts to God. He maintained that His teaching was not His own, but of God, and He proclaimed that of His own self He could do nothing. Professor Smith goes on to say that Christ was neither omnipotent, omniscient nor omnipresent, and he implies that these qualities are not necessities of Godhood. "Nowhere in Scripture is it said that God is omnipotence, omnipresence or omniscience, but it is said He is love."

Literally the statement may be true, but there will be found many, we doubt not, who still incline to the belief that these qualities are implied in the idea of God, and the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm is a very powerful statement to that effect. While we may not be able to conceive of a God who has these qualities, still less can we conceive of a God who does not possess these qualities. It may be that in dealing with Christ we are to reconcile apparent contradictions. Is not personality itself an apparent contradiction of Godhood? To all intents it is a limitation of God. Yet Christ became man and took upon Himself mortality and personality, and in this way became the highest revelation of God that the world has ever known. There is a reconciliation however. It is by means of the eternal in us whereby we recognise the eternal in Christ,

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mediated to us through His manhood and personality. If therefore Christ gave up these qualities of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, it was but that the human in Him might more clearly shine. Potentially they were there. He could still the waves, feed the multitude miraculously, know the unknown in the hearts of men, and by praying to the Father, presently have more than twelve legions of angels to His defence. After the Resurrection it was evident that a great change had passed upon Him, and that the shadows of humanity had been dispelled.

II

IF we examine this double nature of Christ more carefully, we are struck by the difficulty of a reconciliation. This question has certainly been directly, or indirectly in the Incarnation, the source of some discussion, for some maintain that Christ is only human, others that He is divine, others that He cannot be conceived of as divine-human, while the Evangelists have apparently in their pages set Him forth as the Son of God, yet Man. They at least portray Him as God manifested to man with a manhood conditioned by God.

It is clear from their portrayal that Christ accepted the limitations common to man, and that in regard to His divine powers He lived under a self-restraint or called in the power of God, or that He did both. In any case God was with

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Him to this extent, that His divine power was not abandoned, nor accordingly was His divine nature. Yet His manhood was sinless and perfect, and He retained His communion with God through the human soul. By the Incarnation it is evidently implied that He entered into manhood once for all, and the Incarnation thus stands for the growing manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh.

It is here that the real problem of the self-consciousness of Christ arises. Did He then, having thus come to earth, know Himself as the Son of God retaining universal unlimited power? From His sayings it would seem that He did not, and in this respect the Kenotic theory is true, for here at least He had emptied Himself. Though He thought it not robbery to be equal to God, He confessed that the Father was greater than He. He implicitly granted the story of the Virgin Birth, for He maintained that God had become man in Him, and not that God had only taken manhood at a certain stage of its growth, however difficult it may be to understand that this self-limited Christ could be the subject of human infirmity and yet at the same time be the Son of God. The modern argument is that His experience was such that its contents were in the terms of humanity, while the subject of it was divine. It was on the plane of the human that He lived His ideal life; for His manhood was ideal, and it is on this account that the New

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Testament emphasises His redemptive work rather than His example as the human ideal.

In whatever His uniqueness consisted, He was not independent of the conditions of manhood, and if He knew Himself as divine it was in His manhood He realised it so, whether He knew that early or late. His divine power He had, for He was divine. But He interpreted His divine power as mediated by His manhood, and this is the explanation of much that He did, and much that He refused to do. At His Temptation, for instance, He would not go unlawfully beyond this power, nor in Gethsemane, nor yet on the Cross. Himself He could not save, but this is the explanation of His powerlessness. And while the Kenotic theory as generally understood tends to rob Him of His divinity, the Gospel narratives never so present Him. They reveal Him as having a moral insight ; as knowing what is in man, and as needing not that any one should tell Him ; as knowing and having seen Nathanael, Himself unseen and unknown ; as acquainted with the heart of Simon the Pharisee and with the hearts of the Scribes ; and as acquainted with the intentions of all who plotted against Him, and who brought their conundrums to Him so artfully. It has also been pointed out that He claimed to be able to enter into a unique, mystical union with all who were willing to come to Him believing that He was the Son of God.

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These same narratives endow Him with a divine foreknowledge of His Cross, and the suffering entailed in it, as well as of His future glory, and they are unanimous in their assertions that He put off His enemies till His "hour" had come. They also seem to accord to Him a miraculous knowledge which is more than a mere prophetic knowledge. They give Him, it is true, a prophetic knowledge. He prophesies of His coming again and of the fall of Jerusalem, but they also show Him as knowing about the stater in the fish's mouth, and of the ass and the colt in the village for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and of the goodman in whose house He will keep the Passover. These things are hardly to be explained by the insight which is foresight.

The remarkable feature is that on some points Christ seems to confess ignorance. The characteristics of Jesus here are at least very closely allied to humanity as we know it. There is His saying about the day and the hour of the Last Judgment, and the question "Who touched Me?" and with these may be included "How many loaves have ye?" and "Where have ye laid him?" He is astonished, or He seems to be astonished, that there are no figs on the tree which He has cursed, and He wonders at the slowness of faith on the part of His disciples.

Now it will not do to say that on the matter of the Last Judgment Christ pretended that He

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did not know. The statement of our Lord is clear and emphatic on the point. He is not here at least accommodating Himself to the level of knowledge of His generation. For here He is declaring that He has given up His universal relations to the Creation, since He gave up those when He became incarnate. But even when we have granted that, how are we to account for the other questions? Was He accommodating Himself to His time or to His people? Did He ask in order to make the wonder more complete? Did the disciples think Him ignorant, or did He really know what "He would do"? Are we to explain His questions by actual human ignorance, or, if not, why should He ask? Was it because His most characteristic form of knowledge was not apprehension of fact, but insight into the human soul? Were the limits of His insight "the limits of the human mind in its perfection aided by its union with the divine person of the Son of God"?

These are some of the questions that face us in dealing with the self-consciousness of Jesus. It is good to know that, while an intellectual reconciliation of such difficulties is not always on the surface, there is frequently a solution given by faith to the believing soul. For such questions are but a variation of this: "What was the nature of Christ?" The question will remain as to the mode of union of the divine and human in Christ Jesus. Was there an

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affinity between God and man by means of which man revealed God, or was there what has been called "an identity of personal life?" Was there in Christ what transcended human excellence? Surely. "His transcendence of human experience alike in life, death and resurrection in one way isolates Him from us. But it is this very transcendence which is the condition of our finally reaching His blessedness. Christianity is not an idealism; it is an achievement. The soul needs more than an idealism, and what it needs it finds in the narratives of the Gospel. "A link is wanting to unite the historic Jesus," says Professor D. W. Forrest, whom I have already quoted here, "and the Church's interpretation of Him. The gospels are that link." Here we learn the meaning of Christ as a fact for the world. These writers of the Gospel interpret not so much His teaching as Himself, and their own words are themselves to be interpreted by the light of the personality of Christ. Thus every age comes to the historic ground of the Gospel. Every age makes its own interpretation of this wonderful personality to find that there is no final verdict regarding Him unless that He is the Son of God. The very problem is thus itself a solution. We lose ourselves, and find ourselves again in the Christ of the Gospel, the Son of the living God.

CHAPTER V

The Heavenly Baptism of John

As we approach the ministry of Christ we stand on the verge of great questions. The light comes and goes, and there are moments of intense shadow. For here we come upon a force that is new to the world, and to many inexplicable. It has come not without warning, for many signs pointed to Christ. Other stars had risen and shone and set. The morning star alone remained. Nay, the day broke, and the morning star melted away in the sky, for the morning star was the Baptist. Christ who remained was the light. For the people who had long sat in darkness were now to behold the Light which had sprung up for those who were in the region and shadow of death.

For the first time we seem to come really face to face with the Christ of history. Far back the prophets had proclaimed His coming, and their voices had died away. Saints had hoped for Him. In the long night watches they had yearned for Him and yet He had not come. The Hebrew mothers had dreamt of Him. Then after long waiting, when almost un-

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looked for, the angels had heralded His appearance, for the dawn had come.

Part of the preparation for Christ consisted of the work of John the Baptist. It was with John that religion became personal. John, a lineal descendant of the Hebrew prophets in his line of thought, was the outstanding revivalist of his age. He was also a pioneer of the King, and a herald. Like most pioneers, he found the work hard, but he suffered, and took his doom like a brave man. It was a time of gloom, for the Bridegroom of the human heart had not yet come, and it was natural for the children of the bridechamber to mourn. John is typified as the man with the axe. Yet at his word men left their bazaars in Jerusalem to accept the hard life of the desert, in which no man finds a friend.

There was also a preparation in the life of Christ for the work. Though called Rabbi, Christ was never taught by the Pharisees. He had not graduated in their school, but in the home and at the carpenter's bench. He was a layman, and the Jews marvelled, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Yet the education of the home is very important, and no amount of other learning can be a substitute for it. At the age of twelve Christ had begun to feel His difficult way, and to accept, if need be, the small things without a murmur.

This was part of the preparation. Possibly Christ had come under the spell of the Baptist,

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though John, probably in reference to His Messiahship, distinctly says, and even repeats it, "I knew Him not." Mary and Elizabeth were certainly not unacquainted with each other. In the Baptist Christ would find expression and confirmation of His hopes. Christ's estimate of John was not founded upon ignorance. The soul of Christ was touched by the message of John. Christ may have been conscious of being God's Son, but never so conscious as in the presence of John. John was therefore a fitting man to baptise Christ, for no man so understood Him or His mission as this strange, uncouth prophet of the wilderness. When we come to John then we find, just as we do when we come to Christ, that old things have passed away. The old baptism is transfigured, and becomes a new thing. It is true it may not be the Christian baptism, for John baptised only with water unto repentance, and yet it is Christian baptism, for God added the Holy Spirit. Christian baptism is with the Holy Spirit unto life. The baptism of John was for the future remission of sins. If this baptism had conferred the remission of sins Christ would not have been so baptised.

The baptism of Christ was for one thing a preparation for the kingdom of God. That was why it came at the beginning of Christ's ministry. To all others this was a baptism unto repentance. Christ, who needed no repentance,

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accepted the preparation. By it He was set apart for His ministry. It was His public ordination at the hands of God, and by it His people were consecrated to receive salvation, and He to give it. To Christ doubtless it was symbolical, for here He recognised His mission which God now confirmed. He was here baptised into the full stream of human responsibility. Here He came to His own, faced His burdens, measured His powers, and probably felt the shadow of the Cross. Thus Christ fulfilled all righteousness.

There is a strong contrast between John and Christ. John the Baptist is not only an individual, he is also type and history. He is the living type of self-renunciation, and repentance unto life. He gives up ease to live a desert life, to be a leader in the desert, and to die there, like the great prophet of the Old Testament. He is a type of the man who puts aside a career to accept usefulness and its pain. He is the ascetic who starves himself into the hollow eyes and white rapture, and who, by denying himself, finds himself on the heights of God. He has seen the enormity of sin, so he leaves the joys of men to create a new joy in the desert under the very ribs of death. He casts off his possessions. What is it that he hungers for but God? We open our eyes when we meet this man, for we had begun to think that the days of self-denial were over, and that now everyone drank deep

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at the wells of pleasure and passed on with careless rapture and gaiety. John is accordingly a man who troubles our dreams, the man who goes apart to find his soul. In this he is one of the children of eternity. Possibly he went apart to escape temptation. If so he was wrong; at any rate Christ went into the desert to face temptation. But John's error—if error there was—had about it all the elements of magnificence.

It is quite evident that Christ's method was not John's. Christ did not live in the desert, nor was His food locusts and wild honey. To Him all places were holy and every creature of God was good—even the wine of Cana. Christ was not clothed like John, nor was He an abstainer like John. John seems to have gone into the desert to escape the world. Christ went into the desert to be again fitted for the contest with the world. Yet, though no ascetic, Christ had an infinitely more profound sense of sin than John had. But Christ's theory seemed to be that every man must fight His own temptation wherever he was, and he was at liberty to fight it in his own way. Nor did Christ maintain that His way was the only right way. He did not deny that John's method might suit John best. Wisdom was to be justified of her children. Christ never said John was wrong, but He did not believe it was necessary to go apart to live the true life, else He would have done so. Indeed, so far from agreeing with that,

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He began His ministry at a marriage and continued it in the world, and His sense of the world's sin was not lessened by this action, but rather deepened.

This accordingly was the meeting at Jordan of two historic types. John had been looking for the Christ. He maintained that he had not known the Messiah, and that he baptised in order that the Messiah might be revealed. "And I knew Him not but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptising with water." John knew not when He might come. Any day might bring Him. Any morning the sunrise might be the shining of His face. Yet these two could not meet without the prophet saying "Behold the Lamb of God," for John had the prophet's perception of spiritual things, and Christ an inherent glory. When the great day came, Christ left His home as birds that fly from far returning by an infallible instinct. He crossed the plain of Jezreel, the mountains of Samaria and Judæa, and came to where John was baptising in Jordan. Here possibly where the Israelites had crossed long before; where Elijah smote the waters; where the banks were green and the wood-pigeons were calling; at "the Place of Passage" the world crossed from old things to new, and Christ was baptised.

It was a very natural trait of the Baptist that he should shrink from baptising his Lord, for if John was a very daring man he was also very

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humble. Yet here Christ took the Baptist's teaching and made a gospel of it. Christ built much on the past. Christ here gained as well as gave. For this was not so much according to some an installation into office as a self-surrender and public acceptance of His calling. Whatever it was, it was an emptying of self and a step towards the Cross.

To John Christ must have been a mystery, as his doubts later on showed. For Christ was unique. John looked for a Messiah, but it is possible that he did not get the Messiah he originally looked for. The Messiah he looked for was to be a drastic reformer with a certain aloofness from life. The Messiah he found was one aloof from sin. But John accepted Him, and plunged Him into the full tide of human life. In this fashion Christ showed His identity with life. In this same stream were baptised publicans and sinners, the poor, the weary, the vile. "The waters of baptism were ever to be on His head so that the Pharisees standing on the high bank would condemn Him, and the miserable below would claim Him." The baptism of Christ by John was implied in the Incarnation. Christ stooped to man's low estate. This He did to save him.

It was probably about the year 29 A.D. that Christ came to hear John preach. He was urged, doubtless by the Spirit to hear the words of living preaching. Now when John appeared, the

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preaching of the truth of God and the life of God in the soul were at low ebb, for they go together. Faith as a personal force had almost died out. Individual responsibility had been merging into an impersonal view of the Law. The new teaching of John was like a spark in a mine. John represented the new movement that invariably comes when the life has died out of the old. John's call to repentance, his moral grandeur, his vision of Christ with the fan in His hand—which was after all not an untrue estimate of Christ—are all inspiring. These fit John well. He has no ritual, unless his baptism can be called so. His gospel is largely ethical. It is summed up in the one word "Repent." In John, the mind gets back easily through the mist of centuries. John is a reversion to type of which the old Testament is said to consist so largely. The type in this case is that of Elijah. It is above all prophetic, and the later prophets all more or less despised ceremonial law. Yet John's preaching, though it resembles theirs, has a new note in it, the note of a new man in a new age. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" he calls himself, a fact which shows how difficult it is for a man to pass true judgment on himself, for how different is the estimate of Christ! His mistake in the delineation of Jesus is in looking upon Him as one of the prophets merely. In this respect John is not the forerunner of Jesus. "John's God is predominantly the God who

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demands and condemns." Nevertheless John gave an impulse to his Lord, and it was he who baptised Him. Their spirit was different it is true. Their methods were different, and this goes to explain why Christ and His disciples did not make common cause with John, and yet all this does not detract from the greatness of the Baptist.

Why then was Christ baptised of John? Was this baptism on the part of Christ a consecration? Schenkel maintains that it was not. It was not a consecration, nor yet a solemn act of introduction to His public work of redemption. The less could not consecrate the greater. It is true that Christ claims the right to be baptised, and John consents, but that explanation is not sufficient. It is natural that we should still wish to know why Christ should claim to be baptised. What higher necessity was laid upon Christ, since John in his gospel says nothing of it?

Doubtless the Baptist attracted Christ personally. All the people flocked to hear John, and Christ also belonged to the people. The third gospel by a fine allusion lets us read in the soul of Jesus the real motive of His wishing to be baptised; "when all the people were baptised, then Jesus also was baptised." Even if this baptism was for the remission of sins He had a right to share in it, although He had no sins of His own, for Christ here identified Himself

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with the people as their representative, and thus also fulfilled all righteousness.

John's ministry was not a cheerful one. The call to repentance is seldom either cheerful or popular. His was to some extent a negative and preparational ministry. He cleared the ground. His sentences were thunderbolts. He was not in the main a minister of comfort, and he did not preach consoling sermons. Yet we see in John the moving power of one consecrated burning soul. John moved a whole age and gave an impulse to Christ. His baptism it may be belongs to the age of introductory rites and ceremonial observances. Yet it was the climax of a consistent gospel, and through it all John stands a lonely figure of a dead age. He is the link indeed between the living and the dead. The age of his penetrating speech is gone, but the vital truth of his baptism remains. As a preacher he was utterly fearless, and he had a gospel. His teaching was both destructive and constructive. He was not a man who could compromise, or take up a middle position. Duty to him was either duty or it was not. So his words everywhere burn. A master of the fire which he called down from heaven, he had yet a pathos in his life which appeals to every age, and his heart was tender to the touch of God, for it was he who first preached on the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

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A progressive man in the spirit and power of Elijah, he was heard chiefly in the thunder, the earthquake and the fire. Yet it is his glory that he recognised Christ and baptised Him; recognised Him, not by genealogy, but by personal righteousness. He failed in drawing an accurate picture of the Messiah, as many of the Jews did. He believed in the stern side of Christ, and he preached Him as the terror of the world. He thought men should put away their sins and be good before they came to Him, though Christ called men to Him as they were. Yet John's moral ideal was very high. He was humble, courageous, righteous, greatest of those born of women. He had straight words for the formalist and the man of the world, and it is not always so easy to denounce as some think. If in prison he needed a proof of the Messiah, in the desert he needed none. He doubted, and who has not? He was not less on that account. He had the hard vision of Moses, for he too saw the land without entering, and his was the harder vision, for he was still a young man. From his generation his words come down to us still with all the intensity of a personal cry. At thirty his work was done. The crowds were all gone. Herod, who had heard him gladly, had no longer any thought of him. For all his labours John but earned a dungeon and a violent death, and his headless body lay unheeded till the disciples buried it. Did any friendly eye or hand

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cheer his last moments? We do not know. Did he die as he had lived? Was his work a failure? Was he afraid to die? Answer, men of the wilderness, ye who have suffered! Answer prophets, heroes, martyrs, a glorious company of the apostles, for ye know!

CHAPTER VI

Tempted like as We are

IMMEDIATELY after the Baptism came the Temptation, when Christ was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness. It is here we see the miracle of the sinlessness of Christ, a miracle which is attested beyond doubt.

The Temptation of Christ was apparently an historical fact, which Christ must Himself have disclosed to His disciples. It came at the beginning of His ministry as a test of His Messiahship. Here in the wilderness Christ was tempted on all sides of His nature. Temptation is a seduction to evil, not a trial merely; for trial tests, while temptation persuades. God tries. Satan tempts. Sense, imagination and spirit were here attacked, for this also was a part of the development of the historical Christ, and it is a part of God's order that men grow strong by resisting and overcoming temptation.

This has always been God's method. It was so says Fairbairn, in the case of the patriarchs and the prophets. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Isaac, Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel, Amos, were all tempted. Moses fasted on the mount, Elijah in the wilderness,

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Christ in the presence of Satan. Moses was called up the mount by God, Elijah fled into the wilderness in the bitterness of his own heart, and Christ was driven divinely by the Spirit. Moses failed, and broke the tablets of stone, Elijah lost heart, and Christ overcame. The result in Moses was anger, in Elijah despair, and in Christ victory.

The question as to the literalness of the Temptation has frequently been raised. Was this Temptation only a vision, was it a parable of the soul's struggle, or had it any objective reality? Christ, it is clear, trod the winepress alone. If this experience had not some kind of reality the story would not have been told. The question therefore is as to the nature of the reality.

To take the narrative literally, however, is to destroy the meaning. We are dealing with the East. The story seems literal and circumstantial; the high mountain, the pinnacle of the temple, forty days and forty nights. Yet there was no such high mountain, and no record—other than this—of Christ having been on the pinnacle of the temple. This temptation, like all others, was within. It has its "locus" in the human heart. We may call it a prophetic vision if we will. Christ was a Hebrew prophet who saw visions. But the vision had a spiritual significance. It may have summed up in this case His own life so fraught with temptation, for the rich nature is always being tempted. It may have summed

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up the story of His youth or the formation of His character, thus setting before us in parabolic form the pull and thrust that are ever being brought to bear on the spiritual nature. In any case the story is somehow history, and it relates the challenge to the will of man. Ullman, in dealing with the subject, defines temptation as "every influence by which a personality intended for moral action may receive an impulse from good towards evil, every enticement to sin produced by any kind of impression, and especially such a one as, proceeding from some other person, is purposely designed to lead to sin."

This author accepts the Temptation as essentially real and genuine, since it tried Christ both in His character as the Messiah and as man. To the first temptation we are exposed as men, to the second as those who have the consciousness of a higher mission, and to the third as those destined to rule. Quoting from Martensen he says, "It was a personal will which Jesus repelled and conquered." Ullman neither believes in the Temptation as a vision nor as a dream, though he allows that as a mental occurrence in a condition of full consciousness there is more room for its consideration. The vision of evil would, however, not arise in the pure mind of Jesus, and temptation in a dream would be virtually no temptation. As to the idea of it being a parable, he thinks it strange that Christ should have chosen that form to teach His disciples the lessons of the

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Temptation, and also it is difficult to see how what was taught as parable should have been handed down as history.

Doubtless, if we could only find it, there is a reconciliation. In any case the Temptation came within the realm of Christ's experience as part of His subjective history, and it marked a development in the growth of His soul. It was another light upon the way of His self-knowledge. It was history to this extent that it took place in the self-consciousness of Jesus, and it is parable as well. As part of the evolution of the Messiah, it is in keeping with what we know of the Son of God who took flesh, and it is in line with the traditions and history of Israel. There may remain, when all is said, something inexplicable about it, just as there is about the Fall, but none the less is it in line with what we should expect from the ideal man who is Christ Jesus. Christ had undoubtedly the liability to be tempted, for He had a human body and a rational human soul. Otherwise the Temptation means nothing. Temptation is a liability of the rational human nature. God is above it and the beasts of the field are beneath it, but it is for man a possibility and a potential step to higher things. Paul knew this well, for he expounded in his time the theory of the double nature. Christ also found that, when He would do good, evil set itself before Him to entice Him away from the work of saving the world.

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One thing is certain, that the narratives, so far from making out that Christ had any contact with sin, assume all along the sinlessness of Jesus. Whether the story is to be taken parabolically or literally this fact remains. The Gospel knows nothing of a Christ who could not be tempted, as it knows nothing of a Christ who sinned. This Temptation of the wilderness was a necessary incident in the life of the Messiah, as it was in the life of the man. That is why it is placed after the Baptism and before the Ministry. Legend maintains that it took place among the solitary mountains of Moab beyond Jordan, where Moses took his last look at the land of promise, and where Elijah struggled in faith. Tradition also points out a steep rock, Quarantania, by the side of the Jordan, overlooking the Dead Sea, as the scene. Wherever it took place there is at least the picture of a desert place, a place of desolation with the burning sun overhead and the withering sand beneath ; it might almost have been from the story a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, where men's feet stumble upon the dark mountains ; a land of no fragrance, with no trees to give cooling shade and no well springing up for refreshing. It was a place of desolation, because it is a picture of the human soul. It may also be added that this took place in the sensitive soul of Christ, to whom nature was so full of companionship and joy, for He

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loved the lilies of the field and the fields white to harvest, for the beauty of earth was dear to Him. Yet in loneliness He began His work, in loneliness He wrought, and in loneliness He finished it. The loneliest place in the world is the human soul, for this is where men hunger and thirst after God.

The first Temptation was that of sense, for it is by the senses that man is related to the material world most easily. By them his life is uplifted or degraded. In the right use of them lies safety. This temptation had something fiendish about it, for it has a sting in the words "If Thou be the Son of God." It tried to make Christ prove Himself the Son of God by being less than the Son of God. "Let Him save Himself if He be the Christ," it said in effect. "Save Thyself and come down from the Cross" is its cry. It is a cry which presents the morally impossible to the Messiah. Christ could not make a godless use of miracle. The want of bread may be much, but Christ cannot save the lower life at the expense of the higher. Else He would have cured poverty and abolished all suffering and pain. The spiritual is more important than the material. The soul is more than meat.

Christ, according to Dr. Oman, instituted four sacraments: Baptism, the symbol of the cleansed heart ; the Lord's Supper, the symbol of Christian brotherhood ; Ordination, the symbol of the

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Holy Spirit ; and the sacrament of Failure—neither to strive nor cry. This last sacrament is said to be here represented in the first Temptation. It is the institution of suffering, waiting, giving up, failure in the knowledge that God will take up what we lay down if only we trust in Him. It is the sacrament of the more excellent way ; of waiting upon God. “ Man fed full is but a poor animal, or rather a good animal but a poor man.” Christ will not anticipate the word of love by the word of power. He will not throw away the ideal. It is so easy to throw it away, and so impossible to gather up the broken fragments again. “ Go on the hard way,” He seems to say, “ it leads upward, and it ends at the Delectable Mountains and the City of God.”

The second Temptation is more especially that of middle life, not of youth or of material things. This test is through the mind, the test of the conventions in which we live. The man who thinks for himself or who breaks a convention or who goes against custom, which has been called the plague of wise men and the idol of fools, soon discovers the force of this temptation. Yet the fashion of this world passeth away, and no man who is true to God and man can be entirely bound by it. His law must be God's law, which is perfect. Therefore there are times when he must reject the world's smooth lies and its comfortable nothings, and if he does so he will have his dwelling among the beasts. He will be

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despised and rejected of men, however the angels may minister to him. The world constantly says "Conform to our way of thinking. Give up your fanaticism. Do as society does, Be one of us." "The world," said Christ, "hated Me," and it did. Rejected, outcast He lived; and rejected, outcast He died. There never was any room for Him in His own world. He left to His Church the secret of how to succeed by consenting to fail.

The picture is that of the temple, for it is a picture of ambition in the House of God. Shakespeare has given us the companion picture in secular things, and we see there the whole tragedy, with the stains of blood which all the perfumes of Arabia cannot wipe out. In Christ's case the picture, however, is distinctly religious. Christ is represented as standing on the tower of the temple porch, where the priest is wont to stand when he gives the signal for the morning sacrifice. The great gates of the temple slowly open, and the blast of trumpets summons the Jews to begin their day by appearing before the Lord. Now if Christ will only throw Himself down before the people, He will be accepted as the Messiah for whom the Jews have looked so long. Let human admiration, therefore, be His guide. Alas, to do so may be to obtain kingship over the Jews: that only: possibly not even that. This is the temptation to a worldly Messiahship, to the acceptance of a vanity for a reality. Yet

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even His own followers would hardly let Him die. "That be far from Thee," said Peter. "In this refusal of Christ's are implicitly condemned all who run before they are sent, who thrust themselves into perils to which they are not called; all who would fain be Reformers and whom God has not raised up and equipped for the work of Reformation—and who therefore bring themselves and their cause to shame and dishonour."

"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me"? God might question; now instead,
'Tis God shall repay; I am safer so.

In the third Temptation Christ is clearly seen as both divine and human. Man lives in a three-fold environment, that of the outward—bread alone; that of society, in which he lives for comfort and admiration; and lastly that which deals only with the heart. It is here we come upon the need of religion. The command is "Thou shalt worship." Men have in every age tried to do without religion and without God. It is a hopeless experiment. They might as well try on earth to do without bodies. It is not possible to do without religion. Governments that have tried this experiment have found the need rise up and laugh at them. Individuals that have tried to develop themselves so have had to acknowledge in the end that their success has been failure, whatever the world may have called it. Man must have religion. Well for him if

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his religion is that of the heights to which the eagles bring him food.

In this Temptation all limitations have disappeared. Prejudice has gone. The little views have vanished and faded out, and the future is before Christ as an open book. The days of Nazareth, with their narrow and circumscribed outlook, have disappeared. The imagination here is set on fire, that imagination by which we are lost or saved. The kingdoms of earth are here for the taking. Christ may have, if He wishes, His kingdom of this world. Let Him become a political force. Let Him be a temporal power. Nay. He will not. He has not come for this. It is not the will of God that He should do this, and so He will not. It was much with which to be tempted, and doubtless it was a very real temptation to the Messiah. As a rule men are tempted with so little ; not with kingdoms, but with a suspicion of thirty pieces of silver, a mess of pottage, a Babylonish garment, or two changes of raiment. With us so little brings tragedy.

This was a temptation to Christ to put the Cross out of His life, and it is very natural to take the line of least resistance rather than the path through the olive-trees and the Garden. Yet Christ went straight forward. He made clear thereby that it is man's duty to live the higher life. He Himself revealed the possibility of it. These representative temptations He suffered, and from them He came forth as one unconsumed by the

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fire. Paul may have fought with beasts at Ephesus, but there was a period in the life of Christ when He was withdrawn, and no man gave unto Him. "And He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him."

CHAPTER VII

A Teacher Come from God

IN considering Christ as a Teacher we set before ourselves an inviting subject, for everything in regard to the teaching of Christ is full of interest. Not only have we an interest in His teaching, but we claim a special interest in the Teacher. Our difficulty is the difficulty of analysis.

Liddon maintains that two special features characterise the plan of Christ; originality and audacity. According to this authority Christ drew on the past, yet He borrowed nothing from Athens or Alexandria or the Ganges. He was indebted to no contemporary for the scheme of His kingdom. He had dealings with but a few Gentiles during His ministry, and was never out of Palestine from His infancy. "He mingled neither with great thinkers who could mould educated opinion, nor with men of gentle blood who could give its tone to society; He passed those thirty years as an underworker in a carpenter's shop; He lived in what might have seemed the depths of mental solitude and of social obscurity; and then He went forth, not to foment a political revolution, nor yet to found a local

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school of evanescent sentiment, but to proclaim an enduring and world-wide kingdom of souls."

It may be asked "In what does originality consist?" Is it simply being oneself? Is it in saying something that has never been said before, or is it in doing what has never been done before? Many may "be themselves," but their originality may amount to little, for they have and are so little in themselves. Christ was original because He had so much to give, and because all that He ever said and did was characteristic of a unique soul, for He had that in Himself. If the same thing had been said or done before it had never been said or done as Christ said or did it. What Christ said or did He made immortal as Himself, for this is in reality the secret of the originality of Christ. There was a contribution from God here. God adapted divinely the plan of His kingdom to human need, and so Christ's revelation was divine. So was His method, for His method was characteristic of Himself.

The second feature of His plan was its audacity. His plan was given to the world complete. "Put together the Sermon on the Mount, the charge to the twelve apostles, the parables of the kingdom, the discourse in the supper-room, the institution of the two great sacraments, and the plan of our Saviour is before you. And it is enunciated with an accent of calm, unfaltering conviction that it will be realised in human history."

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We who have grown up in the atmosphere of Christian truth may also have grown accustomed to His ideas, for they are now wrought into human life. But we cannot realise what they meant for the people of Christ's day. The most wonderful statements were calmly set forth. No concessions were even hinted at. No allowance was ever suggested, no compromise was thought of, and yet Christ predicted that His Gospel would be preached to the whole world, and the Church remains as the witness of the truth of His words.

It is true that He built on an historical foundation, as a man might build a new edifice on the site of an old ruin. But even if He took the ruins and incorporated them in the new, there was nothing patched about the work of His hands. He maintained the fitness of religious expression in His own teaching, just as He warned His hearers that if they did not find such congruity their religion would be a piece of patchwork; or that it would be as new wine in old wine-skins, where the new would ferment and burst the bonds of the old. If He planted acorns in flower-pots, He first made sure that later on the oaks would find room for themselves in the broad spaces to which they would be transplanted. So He took the old, and made a bridge of it. For those who sought the old, the old was there. For all others it was new. The prophets were there; Moses, authoritative yet superseded; the

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kings and righteous men were there, and history was beating palpably there for the Jew. The doctrines were there with new shining faces. Paradise was there, the Messiah was there, redemption was there, all transfigured by the wondrous illumination of His own mind. All old and all new, gloriously new ; and accordingly unacceptable to many of His day, who said " What new doctrine is this ? " Even in regard to the Scriptures this same process of revision took place. Christ had great veneration for the Scriptures, but it was a new translation He gave to the world. For He found Himself there and He gave Himself to the world in its pages. His Old Testament was edited by Himself, and annotated by the same hand with living marginal references. He brought it up-to-date, took away its age, and gave to the world the New Testament in His blood.

He held that He had not come to destroy, but to fulfil. To fulfil is to fill full, and this He did. It is in this sense that Christ was an innovator. It is true He broke no laws and made no revolution, though He issued a manifesto at the beginning of His ministry which, if observed for a week, would revolutionise the world. He laid down no political programme in an age in which politics and religion were not easily divorced. He was tempted by all the political parties of His day, but He did not come to political parties as such. It might almost be said that

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He had for all such parties a refreshing disrespect. It is true he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, but He was on His own ground there. He respected the law, and allowed that it had its rights. He respected Moses and the priests. He kept the Sabbath—in a new way it is true—by breaking it, as the religious people of His day thought. Yet He turned the world upside down. This He did by means of three things; by His death and by His example and by His teaching. We are here more especially concerned with the last.

If we examine His teaching carefully we are struck by the difficulty of analysing it. It seems, according to the Synoptics, to consist largely of pictures. There are in it parables, conversations, discourses, miracles, epigram, paradox, figure, allegory. It also strikes us that He had no system. He laid down apparently no creed, though He had a progressive plan by which He developed His teaching as His hearers were able to bear it. He worked on the "case-system." A road-side incident gave Him a pulpit, and He could as easily find one in a boat or in the corn-field, or indeed anywhere. He was a popular teacher, though He was never trivial. Yet many times He was misunderstood. According to the Synoptic writers He loved the concrete, according to John He loved the philosophical, the mystic and the abstract. He often taught by object lessons, as when He set a child in the midst of the disciples,

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or washed the disciples' feet. It is said that He told His parables frequently in pairs, to illustrate two sides of a truth or to supplement one truth by another. He loved proverbial wisdom, and crisp pointed sentences which struck the imagination and startled into thought. Yet His difficult sayings are not really difficult to those who have His mind. Style is after all the fragrance of the flower, and the idea can no more be separated from the style than can the fragrance from the flower. His style was perfectly fitted to what He had to express. Yet it was not in His style that His charm lay. His words were spirit and they were life. It is true He had many hard sayings. If there had not been these, His teaching might not have been so powerful to-day or so memorable. His words were the words of eternal life, and they must be judged by their context. He put the truth in such a way that it would strike and stick. He seized the imagination. He scored the tablets of the mind, and so reached the heart. He was not afraid of a seeming inconsistency, and where He seemed most in the wrong to the men of His time He was most right.

The age also in which Christ lived shaped His teaching, as it always does. Christ had to make men think. He had to arrest attention. He was accordingly abundantly sensational—as our age is not. He made His hearer think about himself and about the Christ who spoke to him

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and about the truth and the issues of living, and the meaning of life. He was a rich householder who brought out of His store things new and old. His sayings were so hard that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. This was not because His sayings were so hard to understand, but because they were so hard to follow. This book which enshrines His teaching—though but a fragment—is all pure gold. Never man spake like this man.

It is noticed by those who have written on this subject that Christ also loved figurative forms of expression. The "leaven of the Pharisees," the "narrow gate," the "plenteous harvest," the "hand on the plough," are all instances of this. Yet, fond as Christ was of this form, He was always extremely simple. Nothing could well be simpler than Christ's method of address. He was never involved, and that is why the writers are never involved, for they copied their original very closely. Well might Nicodemus say, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God," for in addition to its other qualities, the teaching of Christ was divinely simple. However rich the fancy of this Teacher may have been, and however acute His discernment, He always spoke clearly and naturally and with verve and colour. He had no casuistry in His teaching. In the smallest compass He attained perfect clearness. It is impossible to make His teaching more concise than it is in His own words. Yet, clear as they

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are, His words are deep. Their clearness and their depth are like those of the stars, or like the blue sky which is untold space. He does not quibble, for He is concerned with eternal principles, and His answer is not only applicable to the occasion on which it is uttered, it is also a universal truth. His truths can be taken out of their setting, and applied to any land and any age. We seem to know His words, too, wherever they are uttered. "A kind of brilliancy at once mild and terrible underlines these words. The true words of Jesus, so to say, reveal themselves. When they are touched in this chaos of traditions of unequal authenticity we feel them vibrate." This is the chasm that exists between the words of Jesus and those of others. We may not very well be able to define the difference, but it is very evident. There are in the words of Jesus a directness, a comprehensiveness, an authority, a tenderness, and a divine touch and appeal that are unmistakable.

In John's narrative the words of Christ show a vein of mysticism not so much elsewhere found. John is chiefly concerned with the teaching of Christ. The works there somewhat fall into the background by comparison, and John maintains that His book is only a fragment of the words of Jesus. Christ Himself wrote nothing. His books were men. He once stooped down and wrote in the dust, but apart from that act of the eastern teacher He had His living

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epistles, and He still has them. His book is the heart of man.

The difficulty in summing up the method of Christ arises from the fact that we are dealing with a mind infinitely broad which no single style could express with absolute fulness. It might also be said that Christ confined Himself to no style. Unique on other points He was unique also in this. Style is the man, but the man in this case was more than man. Subject, disposition, mental limitations, the object of teaching, and audience all affect style. But in Christ we have a man apart, and that is why His style is a style apart. It may be said that we have only snatches of what He said, but enough has been given us to allow us to recognise His style, and to be convinced regarding it. His suggestive sayings have a freshness still which time has not worn off. The eastern glamour and poetry which He threw over life in His words are still full of appeal to the west. If ever East and West meet or can meet it will be in Christ Jesus.

Though again His words are full of poetry, He is not a poet. He is rather the personation of the spirit of poetry. We snatch at His meaning. He lures us on with beauty, the beauty of holiness. Yet He never leaves us in the mist. His meanings are concrete and clear. There is a freedom and breadth about them that is a result of intuitiveness. Everything lies in imperishable figures for the taking.

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The very children can see the pictures. The Good Samaritan is as much of our time as of Christ's. So is the Prodigal Son. Lively as a style of this kind must be, Christ never seems to forget that He is a prophet, and that He has a high and holy mission as well as a prophetic gift. The purpose is ever in the word. Even by searching question, by hard pointed dilemma, by bitter irony, He lays bare the human heart, and His words are at times like the thrust of a rapier. Sometimes the words have in them an appeal which no one can quite reveal, as when He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." His reproaches are full of the sorrow of God. His sympathy and pity are divine, and the tears seem to stain the page as He says, "I have compassion on the multitude."

According to John, Christ's great subject is Himself. It is John who writes of the Ideal Christ, if any distinction may be drawn between the Ideal and the Real. To John, at any rate, the Ideal was the Real. The Christ of John is full of ethereal beauty, and His words are full of heaven. For the seer has here interpreted the prophet, and set down in all their mystic and rapturous beauty the words of the Son of God.

If one may judge from internal evidence. Christ loved the Psalms and the Prophets most. It was by the reading of the Prophets that He seemed to become a man of the Spirit. He adopted their freedom of criticism; He had their

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daring and their faith, as well as their confidence and assurance in regard to the most tremendous things. Human nature was to Him also an open book, as it was to the prophets before Him. He had also their disregard for convention. He judged for Himself, and this He seemed to do intuitively. Put into the most complicated situation by His tempters, He crushed the net with consummate ease and annihilated the tempters.

No doubt environment had something to do with Him, and the formation of His nature, yet environment never seemed to have bound Him in Eastern moulds. He was of the poor and of the toiling, but He had no difficulty in mingling freely with the rich. The thirty years of Nazareth lifted Him to a horizon which was far beyond Galilee, but that time had an unmistakable influence upon Him nevertheless. For it taught Him to look upon Scripture, not as law, but as the inspirer of religious life. To Him Scripture was the divine guide of human life, and human life was to Him the symbol of higher things. So all common life to Him was eloquent of God. Nobody seems to be left out of His illustrations ; servants, kings, farmers, judges, merchants, shepherds, vine-dressers, fishers, peasants, slaves, soldiers, even beggars and thieves, are all there. Everything seemed to come to Him as He spoke. He had no far-fetched flights of oratory, and His images remain. It is clear that He lived very

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near to God, and that He was very conscious of God. God was not for Him one who had taken his journey into a far country, but one who was near, and who permeated His whole being and every department of His life.

We have seen that Christ was simple in His teaching. A still more evident feature of His teaching was its reasonableness. There never was so reasonable a soul as that of Jesus. All the finest instincts of man were summed up in Him, and His teaching shows this. He had the most sensitive nature that ever trembled before sin, and He never came into the presence of sorrow without being moved to the depths by a feeling of infinite pity. He abhorred sensationalism, the so-called sensationalism which our generation loves. He charged His disciples to "tell no man." He called His disciples one by one in the quiet places of that remote Galilee which was yet so near the heart of the world. For Himself He loved the obscurity and silence of prayer; the great spaces by the Galilean Sea; the corn-fields; and the boat from which these simple fishermen cast the trailing net. No man so hated advertisement and the puff direct. His words are beating with sincerity and the seriousness of life. He was of those who neither strive nor cry, nor did He lift up His voice in the street. As a modern evangelist it is questionable if He would have found a place. It is true He lashed the corrupters of the House of God, and who shall

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say He was not reasonable even there? From first to last the teaching of Jesus was characterised by the reasonable spirit that was in Christ, and all that He said and did bears the keenest scrutiny, from the day of the marriage at Cana till the day when He became the Bride of the human heart on Calvary.

One is also struck by the righteousness of His method. He believed in the individual, and He had a passion for the individual. He believed also in the extreme importance of character, and it was on this basis He built. He feared God and worked hard, despairing of no man. Force, popularity, sensationalism, were to Him empty names. He worked on the heart from within. He died falling forward with outstretched hand on the goal. The men of His day did not believe that any good thing could come out of Nazareth, the Flower of Galilee, and ridicule of Nazareth is identified with Christ from the first confession of Nathanael to the time of the inscription on the Cross. Yet He lives, and His is no slender harvest. His fields will yet be reaped, and He who will reap them is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

CHAPTER VIII

He Called unto Him His Twelve Disciples

WHEN exactly Christ called and ordained His disciples we do not know, but most likely it was at the beginning of His ministry. Matthew puts it after the Sermon on the Mount, and Mark seems to agree with him in placing it at the commencement of the ministerial work. If this is so, many will be disposed to agree, not because Matthew and Mark imply this, but because it seems the natural course of development. John also puts the calling of the disciples early, and shows that Christ took over from the Baptist those who had been taught by that great prophet.

It is even probable that early in His ministry Christ realised the wisdom of this method of spreading the knowledge of the kingdom. He thus adopted the usual method of all philosophers and teachers of the age. He gathered round Him a band of pupils, whom He taught and trained in the principles of the faith which He held. These men He chose because of their freshness and vigour and youth; their like-mindedness to Himself; their agreement with

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His aim as Israelites ; and their desire and willingness to support Him. Christ indeed began His work as a teacher among a little circle. He began by going to a marriage, the marriage being probably that of a friend of a disciple. He began His teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum which the disciples frequented. Here it is true He taught, as He always did, as one having authority, but His authority was doubtless to a large extent personal, to begin with, among His disciples, who eventually grew to a recognition of Him as more than a teacher and more than a prophet, for in the end they confessed Him to be the Son of the living God, the Messiah Himself.

These disciples Christ took from among the humbler and more obscure of the world. He had left Nazareth and taken up His abode in Capernaum. John the Baptist had his band of disciples, and it was Christ's method to accept what was in existence, provided it suited His purpose. That He called the best men is evident. His discernment was never at fault, and if in one case He allowed one to become a member of that band who afterwards became a traitor, yet all the disciples gave way at once at the breaking strain. Judas alone went totally against Him. All the others after the crisis rallied to Him again. In the case of Judas allowance must be made for the human heart, and possibly there was not so much a failure here on the part of Christ as

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an allowance or an accommodation, so that the will of God might be fulfilled.

These disciples were not only the medium of much of His teaching, they were also a strong bulwark to Him in their intimacy and friendship and support. They were also His anticipation of the future. His work took to do with the present. His teaching gathered up the past, and His disciples were to Him the safeguard of His Church for time to come. He taught these men, took them about with Him, manifested Himself to them as He did not to the world, called them His friends, brothers, children, fellow-workers, and helpers in the founding of the kingdom of God.

All through His ministry Christ was calling disciples. It is recorded that some offered to follow Him whom He did not accept. One said "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," and another, "Lord, I will follow Thee, but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house." We know that He refused to have some, and we know that some refused to follow Him, while even some who had followed Him went away and walked no more with Him. The so-called mourner is said to have been Thomas, though the phrase "to bury my father" is of the East, and need not be taken literally. The Scribe who said "Lord, I will follow Thee," is supposed to have been Simon the Zealot.

It may be noticed that though Christ chose

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obscure people for His disciples, they were not in all probability poor. Many of them sacrificed in material things in becoming disciples. John was apparently known in the household of the high priest in Jerusalem, and Zebedee, the father of James and John, is recorded as having boats and hired servants. Matthew was a tax-gatherer. Andrew and Peter do not seem to have been poor. They all were willing to leave all and follow their Lord. None of the disciples indeed are spoken of as being poor, though not much information is given regarding them. We know that quite a few among the rich attached themselves to the Saviour, Joseph of Arimathæa, for instance, and the five women who are recorded as following Him—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Salome, and Mary the mother of James and Joses.

Twelve disciples were called, and the number was not without significance to the Jews. Christ built on the old Jewish ideas, for He came to fulfil and not to destroy, or only to destroy so far as He had to fulfil in that way. In the twelve disciples were represented to the Jewish mind the twelve tribes of Israel, as Christ Himself confessed. Christ ordained them, confirming their call and election. He ordained them that they might be with Him, that they might preach and that they might heal. On them was eventually to fall the duty of carrying on the work of Christ.

The manner of their calling seems, as we read it,

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harsh, abrupt and arbitrary. In all likelihood it was not so. The call itself may have had about it a certain air of authority on the part of Christ, but the call itself was but the final act of what many of these disciples had long anticipated. They had all some special fitness for their work, as we can see to-day. Matthew was versed in all the traditions of the Jews. Simon Peter was a man of rock, who in the end became one of the bulwarks of the Church. A man of impulse and action, he had a very pronounced Galilean accent. He had undeniable courage, and there was almost nothing he did not dare to do. His activity and courage were almost Pauline. Andrew was the practical Christian of the group, though he was overshadowed by his brother. James and John, sons of an ambitious mother, though they did not gain the places on the right hand and on the left of Christ, yet justified their appointment abundantly, and no man so entered into the companionship and love and heart of the Master as John did. Philip was the experimental and matter-of-fact Christian, not unlike Thomas, who was of a more melancholy cast of mind. Nathanael had no guile. Simon was a zealot. James the Less stood at the end by the Cross. Of Judas of James we know little, while Judas Iscariot was the treasurer for the poor, who in the end betrayed himself for thirty pieces of silver. Christ was willing to take the best He could find in the matter of disciples.

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Not everyone will join a movement whose end they cannot see. These men were, however, sincere and energetic. They gave up themselves freely to their Lord. At the words "Follow Me" they left all and followed. Not every one will give up his worldly calling and leave all for Christ, for though these disciples in some cases went back temporarily to their old occupations, the call amounted to that. The history of the Christian Church proves that they made effective agents for the work of Christ. They had their failures and their lapses, but at the last they returned to their faith in Christ, whom they so whole-heartedly loved. They were Galileans, and it is Galilee that has influenced the world most. They did not join the cause of Christ for an easy life. They presented to the world the Christian type, a type which has never been equalled or surpassed, and they grew both in knowledge and in power. The old Jewish prejudices fell from them and were outgrown. Much was outlived by them. Their provincialism faded away if their accent of Galilee did not, and whatever their accent was their thought became cosmopolitan, for it became Christian. Their combination was very wonderful. Though some of them had been disciples of John, they did not find themselves out of place with Jesus. They quarrelled among themselves at times in their ignorance, and they found their unity again in Christ. It is indeed a surprise to us

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that they did not quarrel oftener than they did, for they were of the most diverse types. In this little band of twelve there seemed to be no type left out. There were men of action and men of reflection, learned and unlearned, tax-gatherers and tax-resisters, men of self-will and men gentle as children, passionate men and men absolutely void of passion ; all were here and all developing by the wondrous alchemy of Christ. These were the men whom the Master set aside to be the exponents of His truth, and His living epistles who are still known and read of all men. And this band of twelve, so little, and so apparently insignificant, with its inner circle of three and its John whom Jesus loved, grew and went on growing. To Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, the women who ministered to Christ, the community of more than five hundred brethren who saw the risen Lord, there were added the huge accessions of Pentecost. Almost in a day the Christian Church suffered a revolution, and the men who gave up all to follow Christ were abundantly justified.

CHAPTER IX

True Inspiration

THE question which many ask who are sufficiently interested in the matter is this, "Is the Bible true?" They really mean "Is the Bible inspired?" for they know that if this book is inspired it must contain essential truth which will have a bearing on their hearts and lives. Their question, however, is not without its point, for the Bible cannot well be true without being inspired.

It is quite evident then, to begin with, that the Bible is a unity; not a unity that has been made, but a unity that has grown by spontaneous development. In the New Testament the Old lies open; in the Old, the New lies hid. The existence and history of Israel are authentic witnesses. The history of the Church is another witness for the defence of Scripture, and though the evidence of profane history is not so full it is sufficient.

There is revealed to the world in this book the history of a unique religion. This history describes how one little nation out of all the world rose among the nations to a conception

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of monotheism. This book which describes the religion of holiness makes a special claim to be a divine revelation, and it may be granted that no other nation has had such a revelation. Its central figure is the Central Figure of history, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

When we come to the New Testament we find various narratives of the Gospel, some professedly by eye-witnesses and others which claim to have been gathered from eye-witnesses. These narratives, though they may have a certain completeness to us, do not claim to be complete. They distinctly state, indeed, that they are not. Their accounts have all the appearance of conviction, for they contain what is to many self-evident truth. In any case there is no other explanation of the facts, and if these accounts are not true, it rests with us to confute them.

The question that faces us here then is this, "What is, or what constitutes inspiration?" and to that there are various answers. It was once thought to be lowering to religion if every letter of the Bible was not placed there by a divine authority that could nor err. But in all human things there is a liability to error, and it would be strange if so old a book as the Bible should be able to escape the touch of the human. On this point indeed there has grown up a more reasonable view of inspiration, for it is now granted that it is quite as high a belief that the writers should be inspired. It is not an

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inadequate theory that the men who wrote were given a special fitness for the work which they were called upon to undertake. They were thus set apart for a special purpose. These were men who in Christ's lifetime did not fully understand the mission or teaching of Christ, but the time came when they did understand, and they wrote accordingly. To be inspired in this way does not mean to become destitute of human fitness in order to be an obedient and passive instrument of the Holy Spirit. There is included in the idea rather that of a special human fitness. The Holy Spirit came to them recalling things past to their remembrance, and this book became an inspired book because the men were inspired.

As we read their writing we are conscious that it not only deals with a unique subject, but also that it deals with a unique subject in a unique way. How are we to explain this? We cannot explain it by merely raising the degree of inspiration. If we say that a poet of our time was inspired when he wrote a certain poem, we find so great a gap between his inspiration and that of the Evangelists that the explanation is hopeless. We must call in the special circumstances of the time of Christ, and then we see that we can account for the results. For it then becomes evident that these men were set apart in special circumstances, and that they were immortal till their work was done. They had to live to be the witnesses

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to a direct heavenly revelation of the historical Jesus whose story they were to tell.

There is this also to be remembered, that these were special men. Their intimacy with Jesus constituted a special fitness for the work. They had a knowledge and experience from being with Him that were not given to others. They were good men. They had a desire to help with the work. So their writing took shape, and the Holy Ghost helped them, for the Holy Ghost was but the Spirit of Jesus whom they loved. This Holy Spirit is sometimes looked upon as a miraculous element in the process of the formation of the Gospel. Yet we have to remember that this Spirit works by natural means. It is not necessarily the kind of spirit that makes an ignorant man a learned man for the occasion. It does not tell him something he could not possibly know. It is not in this sense a college of virtues and gifts. It is an atmosphere and a power of discernment in holy things pertaining to Christ. It made plain the meanings of Christ that had not formerly struck them. It would not make a foolish man wise for the occasion unless in this way. It might not even create verbal exactness or inerrancy, but it would compel these men to give the truth as they knew it, and as it had appealed to them. This certainly it did.

“Is the Bible then true?” says some one. To that it may be said, “What do you mean by

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the word 'true?' There are various kinds of truth. Do you intend it to conform to your hand-books and primers of science, and must you have this kind of truth before you are willing to accept it? Does your idea of truth include such a presentation as one finds in 'Hamlet'? How true is 'Hamlet?' Judged by the actual you will hardly be able to acknowledge that 'Hamlet' contains anything that is true. When you speak of truth do you restrict the word to that bit of life that has actually happened, or do you include the ideal of which the actual is so small a part? The probability is that on this point you are a literalist, and that you are standing out for fact that has actually happened."

Very well. If then you believe that the Bible is not true to actual fact as you know it, the first question which would naturally be put to you is this, "How do you know that it is not true?" You have not always lived, and you have not always lived everywhere, and these qualifications alone would entitle you to take high ground on this. But possibly you say, "I cannot believe that such things as are related there actually happened." Well, that is not at all surprising. That is a common attitude of every generation. The native of the tropics does not believe that there is such a thing as ice, because he never saw it. A few years ago it was not believed even in this enlightened country that it was possible for anyone to fly. It is a matter of extent of

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knowledge and of belief. Yet if the events of Scripture did not happen, you must have some theory or explanation of the universe, for it certainly bears no evidence of having made itself, and it has much evidence of having been made by someone. So whatever you call that First Cause I call God. The rest follows. A God who made the world would not find it difficult to reveal Himself otherwise. Prophecy, miracle, Christ, conversion, are no longer improbable.

The Bible also bears evidence of being true, and it claims to be so. Men who have written for fifty years lay down their pens and say, "There is a depth we know nothing of." "No Scripture," says Spurgeon, "is exhausted by any single explanation." The flowers in God's garden are always pouring forth fresh fragrance.

Perhaps you believe that part of the Bible is true. That is also a concession for which we are grateful. For the Bible is a very old book, and there are apt to be mistakes in all books that are old, as well as in many that are new. But it has to be said here that Christ seemed to believe the Bible to be true, and He quoted from some of the oldest parts of it. Of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament He quoted from twenty-two. He probably quoted from all the books of the Old Testament, for we have only fragments of what He said. In Matthew's narrative there are over a hundred quotations from twenty Old Testament books. In the four narratives of

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the Gospel there are a hundred and sixty quotations from the Old Testament. Even Paul, who had one of the acutest minds of his generation or of any generation, quoted fifty-three times from the Old Testament, and sometimes he quoted whole paragraphs.

This may also be urged, that if even parts of the Bible were not true it would not directly follow that the rest of the Bible would be false; and even if large sections of the Bible were doubtful, there is enough left quite beyond doubt to make us wise unto salvation. Much that is urged by the agnostic is mere quibble. He would not be any better as a man if he did know what kind of fish swallowed Jonah. So true indeed is this Bible round which controversy has raged that it is a book that cannot age. It does not seem to grow old any more than human nature. Christ speaks to every generation by means of this book so that every generation can understand Him as the Love of God.

That is the answer also to those who say, "But I do not understand the Bible." I am always surprised to hear this statement made, for the people who make it accept so much that they do not understand. Growth, life, sunshine, thought, volition, life in every department, all are full of mystery. We can penetrate so far, and then we come to the dead wall. Yet we may understand as much as we may require. The great difficulty for most lies, not in under-

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standing the Bible, however, but in carrying out its precepts.

We maintain therefore that this is a divinely inspired book ; that it is the best book ; that it is the most needed and the safest book. Wherever this book comes it makes everything live intellectually, morally, spiritually. Everything shall live whither the river cometh. This is a book that does not work to make Protestants, but to make Christians. It is the best of guides. It gives convictions, for we have enough doubts of our own. We cannot read the heart out of it, for it is inexhaustible. It is the most wonderful book of prophecies the world has ever had ; of the Arabian pitching in Babylon and of the spreading of nets in Tyre ; of Nineveh being laid waste and of the Jews being scattered. It was well said by one who was asked, " How do you know that the Bible is an inspired book ? " it was well answered " Because it inspires me." It is an essentially true book, though the higher critic sometimes does not leave us very much of it except the boards. Yet it is a richer book than ever it was. Indeed it is a library rather than a book, and whoever is gathering the hundred best books in the world had better include in his list the sixty-six which are in the Bible. He will find in them the finest literature in the world, though, like the prophet, he may climb their heights six times and see nothing, to see so much on the horizon at the seventh. He will not

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grow out of this book, for it proclaims the will of God. It is the revelation of God, and it enshrines Jesus as the Saviour. It enshrines the Christ who was not afraid of human reason, for He is willing to have us touch the marks of the nails. It was this Christ who said, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me."

CHAPTER X

These are Written that ye might Believe

It is Luke who, in one of his prefaces, gives information as to the writing of the gospel narratives. Christ Himself wrote nothing, though He spoke with a sublime confidence as to the future of His Gospel.

Much has been written about the origin of the gospel narratives, and yet we do not seem to be much nearer certainty. We wander still in the misty region of speculation. The difficulty doubtless arose from the fact that the Gospel was preached long before it was written, and it is possible that when it first began to be written it consisted for the most part of the scattered sayings of Jesus. On the other hand, it has to be borne in mind that the scattered sayings of a writer are frequently the final issue, not the first. But Christ was an itinerant evangelist in His method, and it is very probable that He repeated many of His sayings as He went from place to place. It is certainly also very probable that in the repetition there may have been variations, in order that the Word might be adapted to the particular need of the moment, and this in itself

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may account to some extent for the variations that exist in the different writers. As time went on these sayings may have been increased, connected incidents may have been woven into the text, and the narrative would take shape and colour as the warp and woof were put together. This at least is a possible explanation of much, for many of the incidents related are very vague in some of the Evangelists, who content themselves with saying that the incidents happened "in those days." Some of these very incidents the Evangelists themselves did not see. Mark is said to have got much of his information from Peter. Luke evidently got much from the Virgin Mary. Matthew may have got much when he was a hearer, yet not called as a disciple, for there is no fixed time given for the ordaining of the disciples. Some incidents are almost wholly unconnected, as are also some of the discourses. It is clear that the narrative is in some parts utterly fragmentary, and pieced together partly by recollection and partly by the individuality of the writer. Allowance has also to be made for the nature of the writer, for consciously, or perhaps unconsciously, the nature of the writer has affected the writing. It is possible that the original intention of the Evangelist was to give a compendium of the sayings of Christ for the benefit of the Christian Church which was springing up, and that then it was found to be impossible to separate the Sayings from the

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Life. This might account for the fact that in parts the narrative of one writer is supplementary of the narrative of another, though in the main this does not hold. Another writer may have begun to tell the story chronologically so far as he knew it, but this none of the Evangelists could well do, because none of them had been with Christ from the first.

We see an illustration of such points as this in the Sermon on the Mount as related by Matthew and by Luke. Naturally we ask if they are the same, for there are very great variations. If, for example, we hold that they are the same, there are many difficulties. Luke tells us that this Sermon was delivered after the disciples were chosen, and also that it was "in the plain." Luke gives but thirty verses to it, and in these he has four "Woes" against four Beatitudes. Matthew, on the other hand, relates it before telling of the choosing of the disciples, and he seems to give it as a kind of manifesto of the kingdom. It is expanded in his case into a hundred and seven verses, and according to him it is delivered on the Mount.

Yet possibly and very probably they are the relation of the same discourse. The one may have been abbreviated by Luke for Gentile readers, for Luke leaves out much that would be applicable only to the Jew. Luke also gives many turns to the discourse by way of explanation to the Gentile. It would seem, indeed, as if a

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certain licence had to be granted to the writer in this case, for all that is told as to the date is that "it came to pass in those days," a statement which leaves the date undetermined for the Gentile. Nor would the Gentile be concerned greatly by the omission. If, again, Christ had been on the Hill, and had come down to one of the shoulders of it, it is conceivable that it was both a Sermon on the Mount and a Sermon on the Plain.

The gospel narratives are full of the individuality of the writers. The Synoptics have a common point of view, and are concerned with the ministry and life of Christ. They do not profess to relate His ministry in Judæa, but John fills that gap. The Synoptics tell their story without comment. They do not claim to be eye-witnesses, and so they are not dogmatic like John, who wrote as an eye-witness of the attributes of Christ. The Synoptics then, giving as they do a general view of the ministry of Christ, tell the story as they know it, and in a broad sense their narratives are independent of each other. It has long been a question of dispute theologically as to the existence of an original epistle from which they all drew; and while possibly they wrote independently of each other, they had access to or knowledge of original documents, or a document before their own, which gave the idea and the shape of their own writing. If so, it is not unlikely that this original document

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was primitive, and that they had a desire to supplement it, or that it was not only incomplete, but also so insufficient that it was misleading. This original document may have been besides suitable for only one class of readers. If accordingly this was the case, it was not unnatural that the Evangelists should wish to give their own versions. That they fraudulently plagiarised is not conceivable.

Yet there are difficulties, whatever view of the narratives is adopted. For it may be questioned if the narratives supplement each other to any extent, though they may have supplemented an original document. It is even remarkable that the shortest narrative—that of Mark—should be the fullest in detail. It is clear that Luke did not supplement Matthew, for many important parts of Matthew are omitted from Luke. Nor did Matthew supplement Luke. There is no evidence of one Evangelist borrowing from another, and on no material points do the narratives differ. The conclusion is therefore in favour of the narratives having been written independently of each other, but not independent of an original document for which we cannot account. Much ink has been spilt on this, yet we know very little about the making of the Gospel narratives. If Matthew and Luke are composite, on what documents were they based, and if there was an original document, what has happened to it? It is possible, of course, that short records

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existed of the sayings of Jesus, of the deeds, and of the nativity, as well as genealogies. But the early teaching did not emphasise the events in the life of Christ. The Book of Acts, for instance, either ignores them largely or assumes them. To what date again is the original document to be assigned? If before the Crucifixion it would have been too precious to lose, and if after, surely Paul would have mentioned it. In addition, it has also been remarked as curious that if both Matthew and Luke drew from this document, Matthew has one genealogy and Luke another, while at the same time the nativity stories of Matthew are quite different from those related by Luke. This document—if one may put it so—may have been at first an oral source. There would be a common substratum of teaching in the Christian Church before the publication of these narratives, and many of the witnesses would still be living when these writers put their story together, so that the witnesses would be accessible.

One thing is quite certain. These narratives of Christ were not inventions, for inventors of a gospel would not have written as these men did, nor would they have stopped where these writers stopped. In all likelihood these narratives were received at once in the Christian Church and accepted as genuine.

The common substratum of teaching is evident. The later writers use the phrases of the earlier,

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and this extends even to a parenthesis (" He said unto the sick of the palsy "). There is agreement even in regard to arrangement. Their independence is seen again in such a case as that of the account of the birth of Christ. Matthew gives the Jewish genealogy, tells of the revelation to Joseph, the visit of the magi, the slaughter of the innocents, and the flight to Egypt; while Luke relates the Annunciation, the visit to Elizabeth, the taxing or enrolling, the story of the shepherds and of the visit to the temple.

It will not do to say that there are not discrepancies, for there are. The passage into the country of the Gadarenes for instance precedes certain incidents in Matthew, while in Mark and Luke it follows them. Such discrepancies or contradictions, whether seeming or real, are probably to be explained by independent point of view on the part of the writer, or by his fuller knowledge. Sometimes the discrepancy is to be explained by another similar instance, as in the feeding of the multitude or in the anointing of Christ.

It has also to be considered that the Evangelist may not have intended his account to be complete. Many points are omitted at times. Matthew saw the Ascension, yet he did not relate it. Why? Prudential reasons need not have hindered him. In reality, as John himself tells us, the writers did not set out to tell all. Luke certainly began his story with this intention,

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but even his sources were not complete. All, again, were witnesses of the Resurrection, yet all describe it differently. All tell it from their own point of view. There is an added confirmation in this. The documents are not less complete on this account, but more so. The early Church would not be easily deceived. The writers were there. The witnesses were there. This early Church had no theory of verbal inspiration, or it would not have accepted these accounts. It would not even have accepted the inscription on the Cross, for all four writers gave it differently. But it believed in the freedom of the Spirit, not the bondage of the letter. It believed that the men who wrote these accounts were inspired, and that their books were the result of their inspiration.

Evidently, then, the books are both credible and human, though not purely human. The ground it may be is not firm, and the mist clings intensely round about us. But the probability which is the guide of life becomes here in regard to the Gospel a living certainty. For the fourth narrative, which is sometimes looked upon as a contradiction to the first three, completes the proof. The Synoptics deal with Christ from an objective point of view. They take to do with the Galilean ministry, and they arrive at the self-consciousness of the Messiah. They represent Christ as a true human being, working miracles, and they develop the idea of the king-

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dom of God. The fourth narrative completes the story. It is essentially different. The colouring all through is different. From the first this is the figure of the Messiah; from the first chapter this is the Son of God. John distinctly states his aim. It is to reveal Jesus as the Son of God, and to create faith in Him as the Saviour. This explains why John ignores much. No story of the Birth is to be found in John. There is nothing of the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Lord's Supper, the Sermon on the Mount. John did not write to supplement the others, for like them he tells of the Purification in the Temple, the healing in Capernaum, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the sea, and the anointing at Bethany. John's words are the words of the Spirit, the inner depth and meaning and mystery. Written when the apostolic era was closing, this gospel shows the antagonism of the Jew to Christ. It is not the gospel of the deeds of Jesus but that of the words and teaching of the Son of God. No gospel narrative so presents the spirituality of Christian truth as this does. It is only in the highest sense that it is historical. "In the separate stages of His development Jesus Christ was not what the fourth Evangelist paints Him, but He was that in the height and depth of His influence : He was not always that actually, but He was that essentially. It is the Gospel of the Logos which exists eternally, the Thought, the Express-

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sion, the Revelation, the Word of God. John's is not the human aspect of Christ or the human development. The miracles are all glorified. The wine is that of heaven, the bread is bread from heaven: Christ is Himself the Paschal Lamb: no agony breaks from Christ in Gethsemane: Christ is not forsaken on the Cross. The Logos is not materialised. The Word is made flesh and tabernacles among us, but we behold His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Each man, as Papias said, interpreted the words of the Lord as he was able. It was no more possible to prison Christ in the gospel narrative than it is to prison the sunshine. Was it not Goethe who said that Jesus reascending to the skies took the eternal Scripture of the Gospel back with Him? The wonder is that there is so little of the Evangelists in their narratives. They had a subject on which their pens might easily have driven fast. Yet the story is sublimely simple. The picture is never overdrawn. All through we see Jesus. In all the writers it is the same Lord. To Jülicher He may be by the diversity of His teaching "a psychological impossibility," and it may still be questioned if John really sacrificed anything that was valid from an historical point of view to ideal truth. If he did he but fell back on higher ground.

Mark's is generally supposed to have been the earliest gospel to appear. Mark himself

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is not considered to have ever heard the Lord, but after the death of Christ it is assumed that he attached himself to Peter. It is on this account that he is considered "the interpreter of Peter," and it is agreed that he neither kept back nor perverted anything he had heard. We know Mark's history from the Book of Acts, and we know that he came much into contact with Peter.

According to some, his gospel was written about the years 45-58, though many give a later date. Mark is said to have written carefully as he remembered. This may mean that his gospel was not revised by Peter, but that he took down from Peter whatever Peter recalled. Mark does not profess to have written in their exact order the things which were said or done by Christ, for he probably wrote from his notes without any chronological connection, though there is certainly an arrangement in the events. According to this theory, his gospel is the substance of Peter's teaching so far as Mark knew it. It may even have been a development of that teaching, which grew spontaneously in his hands, and which was not, therefore, written all at once. It is the simplest of the gospels, and it is an account of the work of Jesus in the establishment of His kingdom. It has nothing of the story of the Childhood, nor does it tell of the appearances after the Resurrection. Possibly the stories of the Birth and the Childhood did not become common knowledge until later.

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Nor is it generally held that the gospel ended originally as it does, though there is no valid explanation of the difficulty of a broken account. This early date of the writing of Mark's gospel is maintained for this reason among others, that it has no such account of the appearances of the Risen Christ. There is also less of the miraculous in this gospel than in the others. The Temptation, the sending forth of the disciples, the Transfiguration, and many other incidents are all less touched on and less coloured by the miraculous than are the accounts of the others. Even the discourses of Christ are more briefly told. The Sermon on the Mount is not given at all, and there is no hint that Jesus often went to Jerusalem or that He carried on a Judæan ministry.

Matthew in writing his gospel probably made use of the original document of Mark, and also of a second document called by Papias "The Sayings." Matthew, it is said, wrote this in Hebrew, and each one translated it to the best of his ability. What exactly is meant by the phrase "The Sayings" we do not know, and it is questionable if that phrase refers only to scattered sayings, for it may have referred to the parables and to the discourses, and may have included the doings of Christ. According to Schenkel there was a "primitive Matthew" as well as a "primitive Mark," and this "primitive Matthew," if so published before the year 60, consisted chiefly of the discourses of Christ. This, enlarged, would

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become the first gospel. It may have been added to by the story of the Childhood, and the account of the appearances after the Resurrection, but only one such appearance is included. The genealogy is added on the supposition apparently that Jesus was the Son of Joseph. Matthew accordingly shows that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of David. The Sermon on the Mount shows Him as the new lawgiver and the fulfiller of the Old Testament. What Matthew did not take from the "primitive Mark" or from the "Sayings" he may have got from oral tradition, and care was taken to reconcile Christ to the Jews, for to the unbelieving Jews Christ was still looked upon as a destroyer. There is much of miracle in Matthew, and this has given rise to a great deal of criticism. His gospel is supposed, from its references, to have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem. Much is said in this gospel of our Lord's coming again, and the advent of the kingdom of God.

Luke is considered as the last of the three in point of time, and for it the "primitive Mark" and "The Sayings" are supposed to have been laid under contribution. Luke, the beloved physician and the friend of Paul, was well fitted to write his gospel, though neither an eye-witness nor a disciple. He was thus in reality a compiler, and he drew from many sources, including oral tradition and the extant accounts. In writing his narrative, however, it is not likely that he used

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the first gospel, for had he known of it he would hardly have considered it necessary to write as he did. In giving the Gentile-Christian view he widened the gospel to universal significance. He admitted the later origin of his gospel, and from his words many gospels were in circulation when he wrote. He wrote that there might be not only certainty as to the true state of affairs, but also that he might satisfy the apologetic demand of the growing Church. The personality of Christ is accordingly kept in the foreground. It is Luke who gives most fully the account of the appearances of the Risen Saviour, though it is maintained that his account contradicts Matthew's and Mark's in regard to Galilee. To Luke, Christ was the second Adam, and in this he has the Pauline view. It is Luke also who gives the supposition regarding Christ being the son of Joseph (iii. 23). He is supposed to have taken the verbatim reports which were in his hands, and to have incorporated these in his gospel, which may have been written not later than the year 80.

The fourth gospel differs from all others not merely in style but in essence. There is a different conception of Christ to the mind of the writer for he gives no development of Christ as the others do. Little is said of the Galilean ministry, and it is held that this gospel was not generally received as John's till the end of the second

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century. The reason given for its existence was a dogmatic necessity. It has been maintained as improbable that the author was a native of Palestine, or that he was even a Jew. John gives Christ as having come to the world not merely to the Jews. The Samaritans have a large place in his gospel, and he is supposed to have been mistaken as to the relations that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. He is also thought to be at fault as to the existence of a Bethany in Peræa, as to the name of the place Sychar, and as to the day on which Christ died. He represents Christ as leaving Galilee at the beginning of His ministry, and he has left a psychological enigma to Christianity in John the Baptist directing others to Christ while he—the Baptist—himself holds fast to Old Testament ideas. He is also blamed for making Christ have a fully developed idea regarding his Messiahship from the first, though it is evident that such an idea could not have been “the birth of an hour” but only “the growth of a life.” Then he has also in his gospel much about the criminal process against Christ that the Synoptics do not know. John’s gospel, indeed, presents many difficulties if it is judged in a critical and literal spirit. We are so apt to forget that the men who wrote these gospels were editors rather than authors. Yet they exercised the editor’s freedom, and wrote from what they knew. This explains many of the differences and difficulties. It may explain why the Sermon on the

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Mount is scattered through Mark and Luke. It may account for the unchronological order of many incidents, for incidents were related which illustrated the matter in hand, and the material was freely manipulated. "In those days," may according to Matthew cover a gap of thirty years. Occasionally the memory was at fault. Sometimes also it is possible the story may have been inadvertently related faultily to the writer. Sometimes the point may have been misunderstood. When we make all such allowances, the marvel is not that there are many difficulties—and there are many—but that there are not more. The Gospel remains, and the divergences but prove its truth.

CHAPTER XI

Some Features of the Portrait

To turn to the consideration of Jesus Christ Himself is to be dazzled by the sunlight. For we feel that there is much that cannot be penetrated, the brightness is too intense. Much has been written on the subject, the features have all been noted, the characteristics have all been pointed out ; but these no more explain Him than the petals explain the fragrance of the rose. There is still a beyond ; the beyond of the sun full of light, light of light inaccessible and full of glory.

One point is clear ; Christ cannot be separated from His truth. He not only revealed the truth in His words, He claimed to be it. He claimed to be both God and Man. That claim itself seems almost inexplicable, for it is a claim to be of an illimitable nature in the one case and to acknowledge limitation in the other. Here at the outset is a very startling difficulty in the Person of Jesus. Was the divine nature kept in the background at times : did Christ feel bound to limit Himself in regard to His divinity : if He was God could He also be man subject to all that man suffers : could a God who limited Himself be a God ? These

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questions give intimation of a very real problem as to the Person and Nature of Jesus.

There are those who say they hate the word "problem" regarding Christ. Yet such people forget that to many minds Christ is a very real and appalling problem, and also that He would continue to be so, were it not that He is also the problem's solution. It is possible, indeed, that if all insisted on explaining their problems by reason or by material proof such as Thomas insisted upon—till he was offered it—or as Philip insisted upon—"Show us the Father and it sufficeth us"—then many would remain unbelievers. Both Philip and Thomas wished to see Jesus. Yet there is a realm where sight is lost in faith, just as there is a realm of the future where faith will be lost in sight. Still the solution does not always appeal to us. Even faith must have valid reasons. The heart may have reasons that reason does not know, but reason is not therefore to be kept standing dumb at the door. It is evidently a belief of Christ Himself that rational inquiry is not only allowable, but that it is even desirable and necessary.

This is so because man is more than reason. His mind is not a group of water-tight compartments. He has a soul to be satisfied, and rational and religious are synonymous terms. The Christian is the true rationalist. The very Nature and Person of Christ which seem to present such difficulties are themselves a

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reconciliation to heart and mind, because they appeal both to experience and to history. Some have tried to make out that the Christ of the Gospel is a distortion, for He is represented in one fashion by the Synoptics and in quite another way by John. Perhaps there is something in the argument, for the Synoptic writers are concerned with the historical Person of Christ, and John is concerned with the Nature of Christ. Yet the pictures are not contradictory in this. The gospel as written by John may be searched in vain for contradictions to the gospel as written by the Synoptics. The painters are four, the portrait is one.

Now it is not easy to sum up the chief characteristics of Christ as a teacher and as the founder of a faith, but some may be noticed that are common to all the four narratives. The writer of "Ecce Homo" has called attention to the originality, the calm confidence, and the success of Christ as He set forth His plan. Note is also made of His audacity. But there are other points which proclaim that this is the Christ, the Son of the living God. What then were the pass-words to the society of Jesus?

The more orthodox school of believers maintain that He taught a doctrine of Salvation. That is a feature common to all the Evangelists. What then was this? Schleiermacher, who chiefly emphasised Christ to the inner consciousness of

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man and appreciated His worth to the soul, did not believe in a doctrine of substitutionary atonement, because he held that such a doctrine was nowhere explicitly maintained by Christ. Now what was this theory of salvation if this was so? Christ clearly spoke with a voice of authority in spiritual things. All His lowliness and meekness and condescension could not hide the note of command, with which it might almost be said He pled for men to consider the value of their soul in the sight of God. If there was no explicit theory of salvation in the teaching of Christ, there was something very like it in His teaching, in His work, in His purpose, in His very being and Incarnation, as well as in His death. Were not all His words, both in John and in the Synoptics, directed towards making man of more worth to God and God of more worth to man? Did Christ not always plead for the lifting up of the human soul and for the filling of it with a sense of God? He urged this to Nicodemus to whom He represented the change as amounting to a birth, just as He represented it in Luke in the parable of the Prodigal who needed to return to the Father. It is true that in that parable there is no mention of the Saviour, nor do we need or expect it, for all the parables of that chapter are told to show what the loss of the Lost is to the Loser. All Christ's teaching shows that He looked upon the human soul as infinitely precious. He wrestled for the soul of the woman at the well of Samaria,

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as He wrestled for the soul of Pilate, by whom He is supposed to have been judged. He joined together His people by a fundamental belief in Himself, and He added a picture of God as the Judge who will judge His people by the attitude they have taken up to those with whom Christ has identified Himself. Whether this was a hopeful pessimism or a hopeless optimism it was His Gospel. His Gospel was bound up in Himself, and could not possibly be separated from Him. Conduct as a proof or indication of the heart was a test, for conduct is a sequence of belief. The first thing was apparently that Christ's people should believe in Him as the Son of God, for that belief carried all therest. Dogma is not considered by Christ as enough. To hold a creed is not enough. He can hardly contain Himself against those who merely hold a creed out of which the life has gone. More is needed, and that is got from a personal faith in Him as the Son of the living God, for that is the revelation of the Spirit.

Another striking point common to all the portraits of Christ is His self-consciousness as the Messiah. He maintains that prophets and kings have desired to see His day ; that the Baptist can see all the tokens of Messiahship in the works that He is doing ; and that to receive Him as the Christ is to receive Him that sent Him, for He and the Father are one. All that ever came before Him were thieves and robbers. Yet He does not publish His claim broadcast, for He is no political

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revolutionist. It is a very great claim He makes. He maintains that God is in Him and that He is God. All His teaching is directed towards spiritual things and the kingdom which He represents is to be set up on earth though its origin and consummation are in heaven. He separates Himself from His disciples in the phrase "My Father and your Father" and He authorises His disciples to set out to preach the gospel to every creature. Although always learning obedience, and though He is subject to moral growth and progress, He is complete and developed in His ministry in regard to the idea of His Messiahship. On that point He has no doubts. His disciples must follow Him leaving all. There is a touch of what seems almost intolerance in His teaching, and He will not compromise His truth or separate Himself from His Gospel. Still, intolerant as He seems and high as is His Gospel, it is not of external recognition He is thinking. His kingdom is within, and His disciples are to learn of Him. He alone can bring the soul to God and God to the soul. It is for this as the Messiah He dies, and to His disciples His death is at first a mystery. Before He dies He gives Himself symbolically to His disciples as broken bread, and He institutes a new covenant from God to the world. All through His teaching He insists upon personal attachment to Himself, and what may seem even stranger still, He finds it. He gives no code of morals; He does not argue. He has no system of minute

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details. Before His calm supremacy Moses recedes into the background and indeed fades away. His claim to be God and Man is in all the gospel writers the same. There is no discrepancy here. So is His consciousness of His Messiahship. If this is not to be accepted it must be disproved.

In the third place His Spirit is the same in all. Not only are many of the incidents identical ; not only is the teaching in John but a variant of that in the Synoptics ; but the Spirit of the Jesus of John is the Spirit of the Jesus of the Synoptics. This is not everywhere accepted. Yet the portrait is identical. The look may vary, the tone may vary, but this is not another man. This is but to say that Christ had free play for His nature, and so had the men who wrote of Him. His condescension to Nicodemus for instance is His attitude towards Zacchæus. His compassion for the hungry multitude is in all the writers the same. His marvellous gentleness, as manifested to the woman at the well, is exactly the gentleness of the Christ of the Synoptics. His teaching in regard to the Father is the same in all. The enunciation of His purpose is the same in all. He resists the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in all. He is the Resurrection to Lazarus as He is to the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. His view of sin is in all the gospel narratives alike. He is the Christ of the Cross in John as in Luke, and the marks of the nails are there for both. It may be that the discourses are altered, the parables have variations,

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miracles are left out. There may be less in John about the brotherhood of man. There is more about the Fatherhood of God. There may be less in John's account about the kingdom, but before Pilate, Christ is still the King. All the accounts are trembling over with the Spirit. We may have difficulty in accounting for much in John or for the omission of much. But among the difficulties this does not come. There is no need to account for another Christ. John has not taken away our Lord without knowing where he has laid Him, and among those who have got very near to the heart of Christ will always remain the disciple whom Jesus loved, no mere compiler of events, but one who fully realised the mystery of the pre-existent Christ, the Christ who said "Before Abraham was, I am."

CHAPTER XII

Enormous Claims

WE may now naturally inquire what manifestation of Christ to Himself is to be found in His teaching, for there surely we are warranted in supposing that Christ will reveal His claims.

Those who maintain that this is so might go farther than they have generally done. Deductions as to Christ's witness to Himself have been chiefly drawn on this point from the content of His teaching. But does not the very form and fitness of His teaching proclaim much as evidence? Is there any other teaching in the world that can be compared to it even in this respect? Who ever came so near the human heart as Christ did in His parables or discourses, or who ever set forth God and His love so plainly, so simply, so convincingly, and so passionately as He did? It has been said that Christ's object was not to formulate a system of doctrine, but to thrill souls by a divine impulse, and that His supreme interest was in individuals. If this was so, He succeeded in this, for while speaking to the individual He has made His words of universal significance for mankind.

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The outlook of Jesus in His teaching was very wide. Not only was Nature easily and freely laid under contribution, but human nature yielded up all its secrets to Him who saw so deep under the surface. No one accordingly ever spoke so directly to the human heart, and no one so brought God into human life.

Christ assumed God as the Father and the Judge, the Creator and the Sustainer of all Life. Nature was to Him but the work of God's hands, the God who dominated it all, who clothed the lily and who watched the sparrow's fall. It was not a great step to assume that this God would be interested in man. The Hebrew with his religious conception of God hardly attained to this, though he believed in a personal God who dealt with His people by direct revelation, and who spoke to them face to face. For the rest God was as one who had taken his journey into a far country. To Christ on the other hand God was very near, so near indeed, that He was immanent, the indwelling Presence. Christ held that when He was alone He was not solitary, for the Father was with Him. This is the true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and of the brotherhood of man which, if properly understood, would at once reform the world.

Then also Christ believed that man had sinned, though Christ Himself confessed no sin. He had no hesitation in maintaining that man needed to get back to God. As for Himself, however, He

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uttered no word of penitence. Identified with man as He claimed to be, He never even hinted that sin had any hold over Him. This is to many a stumbling-block that Christ should have been able to take flesh and that He should yet be without sin. But if He was born of the Holy Spirit He could be both, for He was no more separated from man than Adam was by his origin. The supernatural birth did not destroy His individuality or His manhood, and He was not less representative of man. It is argued that if Christ was to save the race He had to become identified with man. Well, He did so, but not with lost man, for though He retained the possibility of sin He sinned not. Not the manner of His birth, but His nature and His origin made Him sinless. Christ, if He did not explicitly refer to the miraculous birth, maintains it in all that He says, for this claim to be God so constant in all His teaching, is pre-eminently this.

The mere fact that Christ appropriated the divine name, Son of God, would not of necessity in itself prove this claim, but it is a claim that is fully borne out apart from that. No man ever lived as He lived or died as He died. Had He been a mere man making such an enormous claim, His words would have been blasphemy. Yet there is no inconsistency anywhere. His life never contradicts His words. No mere man would have said what He said, or such a man would easily have been convicted of sin. Christ made His claim so

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calmly that He almost seemed unconscious of the daring or the enormity of His words. The Jews, however, fully understood whither His words tended. They said He was claiming to be God and to have the power to forgive sins, and though Christ could not give visible proof of such forgiveness, He at least proved by His power to heal that God was with Him.

This idea of sin on man's part not only runs through all His teaching, but He held that it was because of this that He came, and lived, and died. It may also confidently be said that if this is not the explanation of the historical Christ there is no explanation. This was His own explanation of Himself. Early in His ministry, He foreshadowed the Cross with that foresight that is insight. Men in His day tried to explain Him by a relationship, so they said He was the carpenter's son. But that explained nothing of Him; not even His youth. Neither His teaching, His plan, His deeds or His dying, can be explained so. Neither His manhood nor His claim to divinity can be so dealt with. His relatives did not agree with the explanation. Their explanation was that He was beside Himself. Others explained Him by saying that He had a devil. The one explanation was as logical as the other.

There were those even then who saw that for Christ to fill "the terms commonly used with a richer content" was for Him to create a revolution. His teaching was all self-interpretation.

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This does not mean that He was merely the outcome and expression of Jewish modes of thought or of a Jewish environment. His words have the imagery of the East, but they are more. They bear on them gigantic truths, which affect every part of life. In every case His touch is sure. As a physician He has perfect knowledge and perfect power. He always knows all. Standing in the line of the prophets and of the Law, He interprets both with consummate ease, and He does not merely beseech ; He demands. His authority is moral. Physical force He does not recognise. His kingdom is not of this world. During all His ministry He teaches this, and when He dies His generation has not even understood Him. That, however, need not be marvelled at altogether, seeing it may be questioned if the world has even yet fully understood Him. He threw Himself back on moral forces, and God was the great spiritual background of His being. This wonderful intuitive perception of God was not an abnormal gift fitfully exercised. It was for Him the constant law of life. All His judgments and sayings are in accordance with it. There was no effort in their production. His judgments are always the last word. His logic is unassailable, for He is the truth. His authority is not merely moral, it is divine.

In all this He is solitary among mankind. He is unique and unrepeatable. His learning is not of the schools, yet all schools are submerged in

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His thought. He is no trained scribe and not a professional theologian. No school of thought can explain Him, for no single school of thought can contain His doctrine. His teaching overflows all thought for it overflows all life. The Man Jesus did not become God. John explains Him by accepting Him as God from the first. So Christ's claims, stupendous as they are, are consistent with His character. He claims to be the Son of God, and the record shows Him to be so. He claims to be sinless, and Scripture is at one with Him on the point, for even His enemies grant this. He claims to be the Saviour, and the world will one day endorse Peter's conviction, "Thou art the Son of the living God." He claims to be a personal Saviour, and we appropriate the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Not only, however, does Christ claim credentials from God in the words He utters, but He also bases His claim on the works which He does. He holds that He has a right to be believed for the very works' sake. This Nicodemus was prepared to grant, and also all who fully understood the significance of what He did.

Now miracles, it may be, are but a poor evidence of Christian faith, or rather the faith that requires them in order to be strengthened or confirmed, may be but poor. Yet Christ wrought miracles freely, and men followed Him and believed in Him because of them, though Christ, it is clear, did

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not place a high value on them compared with the faith they produced. He spoke of His followers doing greater works than these : not seeing and believing : and of the belief that needs no miracle. His miracles were the means of spreading His fame, they made people think, and they were a dreadful innovation to the people of His time, who said, " What new thing is this ? " But it would have been a miracle if there had been no miracles. For the greatest of all the miracles was Jesus Himself. It may be that to assume a Christ who was all that He has been described, except for miracles, is to beg the question. But to assume a Christ who did not work these miracles and to leave Him without them is to make Him the most inexplicable figure in history. For a Christ who did not work such miracles is altogether inexplicable. In all parts of His life Christ, while human, transcended nature. In His Incarnation, in His words, in His purpose, He was divine. If He also conformed to nature, He did not thereby acknowledge that He was not also above it. By His miracles He put Himself in harmony with the rest of His being. If He deprecated the external part of the miracle, He never did so from the spiritual point of view, for the miracles are the supplement of His teaching and of Himself. They were the works of God, or God working. There may have been a time, too, when people needed miracles in order to believe in Christ, but it may almost be said to-day

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that we now believe in miracle because we believe in Christ. For the supernatural enters into our very conception of Christ, and what is on the part of God cannot be called an interference with nature. If we deny miracle, we must be consistent and deny the supernatural altogether. Of course even the supernatural may be only a relative term, but it can never describe that which is without the presence of God. The miracles of Christ are, in their character, of God. They are consistent with the character of God. They are all, with two possible exceptions, which have their own spiritual significance, miracles of mercy and of love, and they are revelations of the kingdom for which Christ stands. They are necessary parts of the presentation of Christ, parts of an organic whole, which is the realm of grace. We are inclined to think of God only in what we call the ordinary and natural works of Providence. But we have no right to restrict God to these. The miracles were all redemptive in their purpose, as Christ Himself was. Only on one side was the miracle a wonder. If we say that all is miracle, we seem to presuppose that in miracle God is working and in all else He is not. Yet in one sense all is miracle. To create a human being is as great a miracle as to raise one from the dead. In miracle there is the difference of purpose and manifestation. Even the natural may be miraculous. But the miracles of Christ were neither the ordinary course

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of nature nor against it. They were above it. Nature may be a fixed order, but the miracle of Christ was not disorder. It was the suspension of the law by a higher law on the part of the Creator.

These miracles were done in public, and both the disciples and others saw them. There were many competent witnesses and their testimony is sufficient. As time went on the disciples began to see behind the miracle, as Christ intended that they should. Eventually they saw that the great necessity was faith and that where there was no faith there could be no miracle. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" that was the test. These deeds could hardly have been invented, for they were rather a hindrance to Christ than a help. For it was evident in them that Christ had renounced physical force, and had called to His aid the powers of the supernatural. By them in any case Christ bore witness to Himself and manifested His glory. John tells us of the first, in which He not only manifested His glory but also the nature of His glory. For that miracle was typical of His last, of the pouring forth of His own blood on the Cross for the gladness of mankind.

CHAPTER XIII

The Christ of the Cross

It has been said that the problem of Job is the problem of suffering, that the problem of suffering is the problem of Christ's Cross, and that the problem of that Cross is the problem of every cross.

While this is true, and calculated to connect the Old Testament with Christ, it is not possible to separate the story of the Cross from the Old Testament at all. The Old Testament is full of Christ as boyhood has all the essence of the man. There is one passage, indeed, that cannot be detached from Christ, or Christ from it. This fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, written hundreds of years before the fact, has truly been said to be haunted with Christ. It is an etching of the Saviour of the world. All the lines of pain are here. There was nothing deeper the prophet could tell us. This chapter is the real Isaiah. The picture is fadeless as a picture of Raphael, whose colours are as fresh to-day as when in the zenith of his genius he mixed his tints of gold. This gospel of Isaiah may not be a popular gospel, for it is fashionable to-day to refine the Christ of

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history into a mere bloodless phantasy. It is fashionable to take the crown off His head, the crown of thorns. To Isaiah He was the Christ who suffered, who was despised, who carried our sorrows, who was with the wild beasts, who was smitten of God, who was bruised, and who, having in all this no form nor comeliness, was yet the fairest of the sons of men.

I

During all His ministry the shadow of the Cross lay upon Christ's soul. The light of God shone upon Him in the carpenter's shop, and made the horror of the Cross even there. A sword pierced Mary's heart long before she told Luke of it, and gradually events, which are God's hand, shaped themselves so that Gethsemane and Calvary became the inevitable voluntary destination of the Saviour. Even as a boy Jesus knew that He had to be about His Father's business. It was this growing conviction which made Him in the end undertake the ministry which was above all the ministry of the Cross.

This ministry of Jesus Christ was crowded with event, full of sacrifice, burdened with present sorrows and a darkening horizon, and if a ministry may be judged by its intensity of sympathy and strain, none can compare with these three full years in their effect on mankind. During these years He refused no one, He went everywhere,

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healed all who sought Him, preached in the villages and cities, spoke by the way, passed through terrible trials, lost friends and made foes, was misunderstood and misinterpreted, and through all this and the knowledge of the hour of darkness that was coming, He remained the same tender, loving friend and frequently spoke of the Cross by which His memory is enshrined.

Leaving His early ministry, we see that the tryst with the goodman of the house was the beginning of the Christian Church. The large upper room furnished must evermore remain as the type of the Guest-chamber. Christ set His people in a large place as when the soul of the Psalmist was enlarged in his distress. This was an Upper Room and it will always be so. Insofar as the world is concerned, this room will always be high and lifted up. The windows of it will always reflect the dying glories of the sun. The furniture may be bare and scanty after the world's view, but Christ Himself shall furnish it with His broken body and shed blood, and after that the appurtenances shall be sacramental and divine. Here Mephibosheth would experience the kindness of God, and would break bread at the King's table. The Upper Room can never again be bare. The table must always be furnished with guests who realise that this is none other than the House of God.

Here, too, was seen the touch of the Saviour in widening the scope of the Passover Feast. It was

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of the wisdom of Christ to merge the one feast into the other, the particular into the universal, but He took bread and broke it, and He took the cup. The bearers of Livingstone said of the dying man at Ilala who was found on his knees in death that on the first morning, "He was bad, and on the second morning he was very bad, and on the third he was broken." The imagery of Christ is peculiar to all languages and all thought. In whose hand this cup was found, he should be Christ's servant. The simplest of symbols would suffice. The living symbols would strike the imagination and last longer than life itself. The memorial would keep the grass green about the grave, for this would be a pledge of eternal love. Himself the Bread, He would sum up in symbol the meaning of this feast of bitterness and of joy. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Not only at the Feast did Christ take the cup. He drank it in Gethsemane, and it was hard to drink. He was there desolate and homeless and very weary. It is not unlikely that He feared He might die with His great purpose unaccomplished, before indeed He could say, "It is finished." It was in the irony of life that the garden should have been identified both with His agony and His triumph, for even in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and the buds of spring at the time He laid down His life were breaking into bloom.

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II

Not only was Christ despised. He was also rejected. He was taken from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? Pilate and Herod both judged Him, or rather refused to judge Him as they too shall one day stand at the bar of God.

It is Luke who tells us of Herod, "that fox." Herod's curiosity was at last to be satisfied, but only partly, for Herod saw Christ, but never heard Him. Herod was past saving, though His life was yet full in him. The silence of Christ before Herod is the most complete and convincing evidence we have as to Herod's nature. Herod in the end allowed Christ's claim to be a king. He made Christ a mock king, and in a coronation of sorrow he arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe and mocked Him and set Him at nought, and thereafter sent Him again to Pilate.

The story of Christ before Pilate is an epitome of the Christ who is still judged faultless and betrayed by the man who dare not make plain to himself the seeming contradiction between Cæsar and Christ. So difficult is it to kill a lie when Caiaphas has given it wings. Pilate, however is not prejudiced against Christ. He is prejudiced rather against the provincial Jews. But it is early apparent that Christ is far out of Pilate's depth. The question is as to the Kingship of Christ. "Yes," says Christ, "if thou sayest so,

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I am a king, but My kingdom is not of this world. So I have not been perverting the nation. I have broken no law. I have never forbidden to give tribute to Cæsar. My kingdom is spiritual, else would My servants fight. I could have twelve legions of angels at once, but My kingdom is not founded on material force. I am not against Cæsar, but for God. My sphere is not local. I am for the truth."

Now had Pilate had a keen mind for spiritual things he would have asked, "What is the truth?" and the answer of Christ might have been "I am." But Pilate missed the point with his jest. He jested with the truth and threw it away. Yet it is notable that Pilate found no fault in Christ. Stephen called the Jews the betrayers and murderers of the Lord. Peter said that Pilate was determined to let Christ go. But a false issue was put before Pilate, and Pilate had to choose where he had really no choice. Out of his own words Pilate made himself, however, the judge, for he said, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and have power to release Thee?" Pilate is doubtless included in the prayer on the Cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." His guilt was the guilt of an ignorance that ought to have satisfied itself, that was indeed satisfied and overborne. Pilate therefore may wash his hands before the generations, but he will never wash out those stains that cling to his hands, and

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all the perfumes of Arabia will not cleanse those hands.

III

The story of the Crucifixion has often been told, but no version of it has ever matched the simplicity of the gospel narratives. These narratives have their different points of view, different sources, different individuality. Amidst all differences certain points are clear. For one, that this is no mere martyrdom. This is the story of the death of the Saviour.

All the Evangelists tell us of the scourging, the abuse, the mockery, the savagery of the procession along the Sorrowful Way, the saddest procession surely that ever moved out of any of the cities of earth. Round that sorrowful procession many legends have clustered, among which that of Veronica and the Wandering Jew will always have a place. These Evangelists tell of the daughters of Jerusalem, of the disciples, of the women at the Cross. It is Mark, the man with the seeing eye, who tells us of Simon the Cyrenian. Simon took the end of the trailing Cross and helped the fainting Christ by making Christ's Cross his own. Simon in this comes down through the generations trailing clouds and glory. His reward is that he is the father of Alexander and Rufus, pillars of the Church at Rome. The life that is linked to Christ by the

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Cross will henceforth be in step with the Saviour's. The story of this accidental stranger strikes the imagination. It is the story of a wayfarer stumbling into the light of the Cross in the best blunder of his life, and of his finding the Cross the meeting-place for souls. It is probable that no cross appealed to him like this, and Simon's conviction became his reward. Christ in contact with the Cross had already begun to draw all men unto Him.

Another point to which the Evangelists call our attention is that of the physical and spiritual agony of the Christ of the Cross. The Evangelists have not minimised the physical suffering of Christ, nor have they exaggerated it. They cannot exaggerate it, for on the Cross the victim suffered untold agonies. With a weak body which He had never spared, with a mind infinitely sensitive, a spirit beyond compare, this was indeed a Man of Sorrows. The twenty-second Psalm was appropriated by Christ as He died. This is a Psalm whose words drop blood at every step. The physical anguish of crucifixion was itself so terrible that one scarce dare describe it. To that are to be added the scourging and the agony in Gethsemane, with its betrayal by His own disciples. How shamefully His followers left Him was proclaimed by the "bird crying to the dawn." Gethsemane with its blood-like sweat was almost the last blow. For over three years this divine Man had been a homeless wanderer. He who

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offered such wondrous rest to His children had for Himself no place to lay His head. The pain of crucifixion made Him thirst who sat by the well-side of Samaria, and who was the very essence of humanity. Yet the chief horror of the Cross, great as was its physical anguish, was not that. It was the spiritual anguish that racked Him there. Of the seven words of the Cross, only two, or at the most three, have any bearing on the physical side. Only the words dealing with His thirst and with Mary have any earthward significance, unless we include with them the saying of His forgiving love. The second of the seven is to the malefactor and speaks of Paradise. The fourth is as to the hiding of God's face, and every word is emphatic. The sixth is as to the completing of God's work, and Christ alone of all the sons of men could truly use it. The seventh reveals that the darkness is ending, that God is still His God, and that it is into the Father's hand He commits His spirit. Most of the sayings proclaim the homelessness of the Son of God. No wonder Handel wrote his "He was despised" in tears. Here, forsaken by God or seemingly forsaken, forsaken by His disciples, shame upon shame heaped on Him, suffering agonies, it was thus the Saviour wrought out the salvation of the world. Yet His last cry proclaimed that God had enabled Him to finish His work with joy.

In all this the Evangelists get behind the Cross to its secret. Had this been only a martyr's

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death, even the first, we should not read it as we do. When the Evangelists wrote, the meaning of the twenty-second Psalm and the vision of Isaiah had become plain. They saw that while Christ had died on the Cross He had not died by it, and that is why they tell us that reproach broke His heart, so that men should be saved both by water and by blood. To their minds the work of redemption on the part of Christ was over when He who had had on earth no place for His head laid it down at last on the Cross. All His prophecies had become clear when they wrote by the aid of the Holy Spirit. They saw again the soldiers cast lots for His seamless robe, the type of His Church. They heard the reviling of those who proclaimed that they would believe Christ to be the Messiah by the very act which would prove He was not. They saw the soldiers sit down and watch Him there, surely the strangest sight that the soldiers of the world had ever looked upon. They saw again in vision the motley groups, and they saw Him so die. Even to watch was a long agony. At last the head hangs stiff and still. The strength of the Crucified is dried up like a potsherd, and His tongue cleaves to His jaws. He has been brought at last to the dust of death. Now, too, the women weep unrestrained. The disciples talk in whispers of Him who was so loved and so misunderstood and forsaken. Neither James nor John is here on the right hand or on the left to drink of His cup or to be baptised

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with His baptism, yet these places are not unoccupied. There is a haunting terror in the glances of the disciples for they know not what. As they watch intently in the gathering gloom they realise that His face has no longer the look that is seen on the face of the living.

Then they feel the very elements give way about them. The three hours' darkness reaches their hearts and lies on their very souls, for it is the darkness of the face of God. The storm after the heat well describes the crisis to which all things have been brought on this Sabbath-eve. After the storm the earthquake, but none of these things can disturb the central figure on the Cross, for the Christ who has changed all history is Himself changed and has passed out of the storm, having fallen upon quiet waters. Death has given Him his wonted calm, and as He looks down from the Cross with unseeing eyes His face seems full of compassion.

The rabble has had its hour and begins to melt away : Roman soldiers, scribes, priests, disciples, friend and foe. One group long remains. John is in it, and Mary, whose agony is now complete. It is the hour and power of darkness, and by means of it the Saviour of the lowly has at last made His salvation perfect, and His Cross imperishable with the love of God.

CHAPTER XIV

The Mystery of the Resurrection

PAUL of all men has maintained the truth and importance of the Resurrection. No man has examined the evidence more carefully : he is well entitled to speak. In his great chapter he has faced the argument against it to the last word ; and to him the fact that Christ rose from the dead was half of the Gospel. The question resolves itself, so far as the story is concerned, into an examination first of the circumstances and then of the evidence.

I

No doubt if the Resurrection took place it was a miracle. To us it is a miracle still. It was an event far out of the ordinary and natural laws of life as we know them. It does not follow that it was anything extraordinary to Him who professes to hold the keys both of life and death. In any case it is not so great a miracle as Christ Himself, for Christ Himself is a far more stupendous miracle than His rising from the dead.

The circumstances in themselves are clear. It is clear that Christ died. Pilate was satisfied

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on that point ; so was Joseph ; so was Nicodemus ; so was the Roman soldier, and so was the centurion. Blood and water came from his ruptured heart. His legs were not broken. His sufferings were those of a dying man, and there were many who saw Him die. Accordingly all the stories that deal with the changing of the body or the theft of the body answer themselves. The story, for instance, that His disciples took away His body could not be true because of the precautions adopted. Sleeping soldiers could not have known who took away the body, even if it had been taken away. The soldiers dared not sleep at their post. No one dared break the seal. The disciples who shut their doors so close for fear of the Jews dared not attempt the theft even if they would, and so far from dreaming of it, they would scarce accept the fact of the empty tomb and the risen Lord, and Thomas, for one, refused until he had the evidence of his senses. Nor could the body have been stolen that another might be substituted, nor could it have been confused with any other, for there was no other there. So the circumstances as to the death are at least conclusive so far.

They are also quite conclusive as to the Resurrection. According to accounts Christ appeared at least ten times among the living after He rose from the dead. He showed Himself to the women returning from the sepulchre ; to Mary Magdalene in the garden when she made the great

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supposition of her life ; to Peter probably in the afternoon ; to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on their retreat from Jerusalem in the evening ; and also to the apostles with the exception of Thomas, in the evening : all these five appearances on the Resurrection day. He appeared also to the apostles eight days after, when Thomas was present ; He came to them then and breathed on them the Sabbath blessing. He appeared to seven of the apostles on the shores of Tiberias, and John maintains that this is Christ's third appearance to His disciples after the Resurrection. Next He showed Himself to the eleven apostles and to about five hundred brethren at once on a mountain in Galilee. James also saw Him at Jerusalem, most likely immediately before the Ascension.

These are the outward facts on which the Resurrection bases itself. There are many other contributing circumstances, as for instance in the nature of Christ and in His prophecies and in the universal hope of man for immortality. Against these we may put the improbability of a Resurrection, and unless we grant that Christ was the Son of God we may grant the impossibility of a Resurrection, for there is no precedent for such a thing and no analogy to it.

II

Let us now glance at the question of the truth of the evidence. In considering this we are

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entitled to deal with the truth of Scripture. Is the story told there true? Well, the events written of there were still in the minds of those who read them in the gospel. Public notoriety proclaimed that the story was genuine. However, either the story was true or it was not. If it was not true, then it was a fiction, and if so, then the high priest, the Roman governor, and all the people agreed that this fiction should be allowed to spread, for except for the story of the bribe to the soldiers there was no contradiction. In reality there was so much evidence, so many witnesses, that the fact of the Resurrection was established beyond dispute. The witnesses can be put in the box with perfect freedom. These eleven, for example, are sane men. They could not have invented a story which they had difficulty in accepting, for it seemed too good to be true. If it be urged that the evidence of these men is not sufficient, and that many did not see Christ after He rose, it has to be urged also that the negative proves nothing. Not having seen Him does not prove that He did not rise. Many things happened in last century which we did not see. Such evidence proves nothing except that we were not there. These disciples knew Christ and could recognise Him. Thomas indeed demanded absolute proof, though when it was offered he did not need it. They had nothing to gain by spreading abroad the story of the Resurrec-

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tion if Christ had not risen. Their testimony to a risen Lord would only be a source of trouble to them from the Jews, though a dead Christ would in reality have been more unaccountable than one who had risen from the dead.

Paul's argument for the Resurrection is instructive and complete, a triumph of mind and heart consecrated to the Saviour who rose. In his great chapter Paul is a master of merciless logic. His first paragraph proclaims that Christ has showed Himself to many, and it is a surprising statement in connection with this that He has showed Himself to Paul. As Paul goes on in his argument he adopts and develops a very clever method of building up his case. It is a method which in the hands of a skilful antagonist is a deadly weapon. He says in effect, "Everybody grants that Christ died; even His enemies grant that. We are all agreed on that point. Our real difficulty is with the empty tomb. For either Christ rose or He did not rise. Let us suppose that He never rose."

It is then Paul's contention that the foundations are destroyed. If there is no Resurrection there is no Gospel. Christians have been preaching a lie. If Christ did not rise there was no sacrificial death. If there is no such death there is no pardon, and if there is no pardon there is no Gospel. The heart accordingly falls out of Christianity. The words of Christ may still be very gracious, but they are only thereby the

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more of a mockery. Preaching then is only a sham, hollow, vain; a shadow, an unreality. No matter how sincere it may be, if it is not founded on fact what avails it? At best it is a delusion. All who met in the Upper Room, in the catacombs, in their synagogues; who kept their love feasts, who maintained with a power unequalled and a logic unpierced their belief in Christ, have all been deluded and have died in their sins. Their gospel rested on nothing except a figment. Or they were knaves who preached a gospel they had made, and then it was not even a gospel, and they did not preach. What motive could induce them to adopt such an attitude, for they could gain by it but persecution and their soul's peace?

Their preaching in such a case was vain. No man is benefited or saved by a delusion. It is hard enough to be saved by a reality. A dead Christ can do nothing, for that would be but a half gospel which cannot save. Here also Paul fastened the argument down. How are we to explain a Christ who died and who never rose from the dead? This Christ who died claimed to be the Son of God, and if He died and did not rise from the dead, then death was stronger than God.

The Christ who came from heaven claimed to be divine. His claim was unique. If therefore He continued to lie in Joseph's tomb there could be but one conclusion. His claim was false,

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and He was not the Son of God. This means that the divinity of Christ is bound up in the Resurrection. Christ was accordingly a false witness to Himself. He often said He would rise again. Then, too, all the so-called facts of the Resurrection to which Peter and the other disciples, and the Evangelists, and Mary, and James, and the five hundred bore witness are false. For Christ never rose. These witnesses were all deceived. Everything regarding Him was false. He never was the Son of God. He never did any miracles. He never taught as the gospel evidently proclaims He did. The saints have died in a delusion. The desire of our hearts is a delusion. How does it all sound ?

If we turn then to assume the Resurrection to be true, the first thing that follows is that resurrection is possible. Even if that one who rose is Christ, resurrection is possible, and we may go further and say that it is possible because that one who rose is Christ. It is true His risen body is a mystery. It is a body set free from material conditions, it can pass through a closed tomb and closed doors. It can be present in different and distant places at no great interval of time. It is the same Christ. He is still full of humanity, and His question is, "Children, have ye any meat?" He is in a manner changed. Mary at first does not know Him as He stands quite near. Yet His voice is instantly recognisable. He is no phantom. He eats with His disciples,

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proclaims that a spirit hath not flesh and blood, offers to let Thomas touch the marks of the nails, receives a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb, and is known even by the Emmaus wanderers in the breaking of bread. So is proclaimed the human identity and the reality of the Resurrection body, the body of glory.

Also if Christ rose, the Bible is true. It is then a consistent word, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" The disciples were long blind to the purpose of God. What they knew not then they knew thereafter. The Bible stands or falls by the Resurrection. It gives us our choice between the supernatural and the absurd. That is Paul's argument, and nobody disputed his argument for a very simple reason that nobody could. Paul, with the acutest and most powerful mind of his generation, had satisfied himself by irrefutable evidence. His statements were true.

In addition to this, if Christ rose the supernatural is true, and God is true. There is little significance in the fact that Christ died if He did not also rise again. Of what importance is it to us to know of the Person of Christ, His humanity, His lofty teaching? These do not make a gospel. He completed His Gospel by His Resurrection. That was the keystone that perfected the arch. It is not a matter that adds doubt to the authenticity of Christ to say that the supernatural must be adduced for His

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Resurrection. That is a confirmation of the event, just as the nature of the risen body is. For Christ claims to be in touch with the supernatural—which I take to be God. I believe in the supernatural, partly because I believe in Christ, and I believe in Christ partly because I believe in the supernatural. The supernatural is not a stumbling-block to me when I believe in God.

This, then, to go further, still gives me a gospel. For, from it, I know that Christ died for my sins. It is the Resurrection that makes the redemptive element clear. It makes the Gospel a coherent unity. If Christ rose, it was because He died for us. If He rose, salvation is possible. If He rose, we shall rise. "One world at a time," said the dying Thoreau. One world at a time is not enough. We live in two. We are in the midst of immortal things. A dead Christ can neither save nor yet found a living Church, a Church that defies the world and time, a Church against which the gates of darkness shall not prevail. We who were not living at the time have no evidence that the Saviour did not rise, and we have abundant, satisfying evidence that He did. The apostles were quite satisfied that they had got to the heart of the truth. They used a phrase after that time which at first puzzles us. It is the "power of the Resurrection." So the Resurrection either was a power or had power. What did they mean? They meant that this rising from the dead on the

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part of Christ was the final proof and sign to men that Christ was the divine Son of God. If God had not raised up Jesus then whatever else Jesus Christ was He was not the Son of God. Did the disciples find this fact a power? It was the burden of all their teaching, the central pillar of their faith. Peter never missed it out. Paul disputed, reasoned, argued and contended for it. The Jews boiled with indignation at the use the apostles made of it. It was a power. It was the power of God unto salvation.

In the light of all this is it still thought a thing incredible among us that God should raise Jesus from the dead? Is not this fact in keeping both with the character, nature and power of God? It was in accordance with the nature of Christ who gave back Lazarus to the weeping sisters and to the world. Dr. Arnold of Rugby held that the evidence of the Resurrection was satisfactory. Thousands and tens of thousands, he said, had gone through it, piece by piece, as carefully as ever judge summed up on a most important case. He himself had gone over it many times to satisfy himself. He had been used to historical examination. His conviction was that there was no fact of history more fully or satisfactorily proved than that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

If God created a world out of nothing there is nothing very marvellous in the Resurrection, for that is not any harder than creation. If we are to-day what we were not once, we may become

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what we are not now. This surely is of God. There is a first birth, a second, and a third. "I am," says Victor Hugo, "the tadpole of an archangel." The parable has it that the insect left the water and found wings and lived in air. Its former friends wished it to come back but it could not. To be made fit for one world may be to be made unfit for another. Nature's motto ever is "Life." So is the heart's and so is God's. We shall find our way through the chrysalis and attain at last a place in the sun. "He spake of the temple of His body!" It is the last inheritance and the greatest. This mortal shall put on immortality. It is in this hope we lay ourselves down for the long rest to which so many dear ones have already attained. But we shall wake with the light on our eyes. We wait the dawn of that Easter which shall be the brightest and last and best.

CHAPTER XV

The Redemptive Element in Christ

I

MANY difficulties at once suggest themselves whenever one begins to deal with the redemptive element in Christ. It is clear that if Christ is truly as He is represented in the New Testament, and especially as He is represented by the Synoptics and John, then there entered into His life and purpose, elements that never characterised the being of any other of the human race. It is as to these features that the difficulties arise.

Yet the story of Jesus is very simply told, whatever difficulty we may have in grasping its ultimate significance for our lives. It is the story of One who came also in accordance with the will of the Father to fulfil a certain work. In this, He and the Father were one. Long prefigured in history, long typified, long yearned for, He came, and when He came to His own His own received Him not. They failed indeed to recognise Him, they misinterpreted and misunderstood Him, and the very people whom God had set aside to be ready to receive Him rejected Him utterly, and were

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themselves scattered to the ends of the earth and the four winds of heaven.

It is clear that Christ believed Himself to be identified with the human race and also to be representative of it. Paul thought so too. Paul looked on His humanity, saw that He was "born of a woman" and made under the law, that He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, Jesus of Nazareth whom he had persecuted. It is true that on one point a great gulf separated Him from man. While He called Himself the Son of Man, and had in His personality the limitations of time and space, though He had accepted the little outfit of life and had given up the splendour of the infinite and of heaven, He remained without sin. He had emptied and robbed Himself, but not of His sinlessness. He spoke much of sin, of its stain, and its power to blind the soul and to rob it of God, and it is a remarkable point that though even His enemies failed to point out sin in Him, He spoke more searchingly of it than any other has ever done.

Some one will at once point out that it is difficult to see how such a one could be said to be identified with man if He had no sin, or how He could then be a Redeemer. To that it falls to be said that sin is not an essential feature of man, that sin is incidental to man, and that accordingly Christ did not need to have sinned in order to be man. Man as we know him is sinful, and it was lost man that Christ came to

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redeem, but it is not necessarily the lost who save the lost. Another reply might take note of the fact that Christ accepted all the results of sin ; the pain of human life, the misery, poverty, toil, passion, and in the end death itself. Certainly in this sense God made Him to be sin for us though He knew no sin. He entered a world of sin from a sinless world, lived in this world and at last suffered the penalty that sin had brought to man. It is clear, therefore, that sin was imputed to Him and that He accepted the imputation. Man on his part is full of sin. He has been shaped in iniquity, and he is universally impressed by the burden which he carries, for he carries about with him a body of death. He is himself a living witness of a past he cannot altogether fathom, and he owns to having a nature which he cannot by any effort of his own supersede. The result of this nature is death. Christ accepted that condition also when He became man.

The result of sin most evident in the world—next to physical death—is that of spiritual death. Sin deadens the soul to spiritual issues and makes the life of God an impossibility to the soul. To the soul in sin God is very far off. He is a God who must be reconciled. Yet the means of reconciliation are obviously wanting. In the Old Testament there is a long ritual of sacrifice on the part of the priest, who stands in his appointed office between God and man. The

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difficulty there is to see how the blood of bulls or of goats can reconcile an offended God. The truth of these acts of ritual is the truth of type and of symbol, though Israel did not always see this. In the fulness of time, therefore, God gave His Son, and it is notable that John the Baptist pointed Him out to his hearers as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John, if in some respects of the Old Testament, is essentially of the New, for he has no ritual, and he easily gets from the type to the typified.

Evidently then in some fashion Christ became the reconciling force making it possible for God to forgive man—He already loved him—and for man to obtain peace. How was this brought about?

The more one thinks of this plan the more wonderful and fitting and effective and divine it appears to be. Christ in Himself, though God, became man to do this. He took our place, not to propitiate God, but to make propitiation for our sins. At a great price therefore obtained we this freedom. At the cost of giving up His own Son, God originated this redemption, and at the cost of robbing Himself of heavenly glory Christ came. We have to remember that this is not a mere substitution, it is a deprivation unto death. God did not hate the world. Love originated the gift, exceeding love. Love gave itself. It could give no more. It would not give less. Love provided the sacrifice and

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offered it. A unique sacrifice because a unique Saviour.

What then was the redemptive element in Christ, and how did He make salvation possible for His people? I should say first of all in the fact of His being Christ lay one element of redemption. He clearly knew and realised the meaning of sin as God knew it. He knew what was due to God before righteousness was possible to man, and He alone could pay the full price. Much has been made of Christ's death, even of His physical sufferings, and these were so great that we may not realise them. But the death of Christ might not have been sufficient except as it was Christ who died. His disciples long misunderstood His references to His death, though in the last period of His ministry Christ often referred to it. It is strange, too, that none of the other physical sufferings of Christ are connected with the Atonement, though He was a Man of Sorrows. Doubtless the explanation is that till He died His work as Redeemer was not finished. Yet Christ forgave sins before He died. He forgave those who believed in Him as the Son of God, and it may be added that His redemptive work was not finished when He died, for His death without His resurrection would have been but half a gospel. On the other hand, it was finished so far as His active work was concerned, and it was God who raised Him up from the dead.

Christ, it is evident, always connected His death

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with His purpose as Redeemer. He never pretended that it was possible for Him to die a martyr's death. He was dying to make a gospel, and to Him it was an inevitable death bound up with His mission, whether we believe that it grew out of His mission or whether He foresaw it from the first. For, whether He grew into the knowledge of it humanly, or whether He always knew of it, He always referred to it in the same way, and we have no warrant for believing that on this point His knowledge was exempt from human development. Here therefore He fully identified Himself with man, with man's sin and guilt and punishment, and here He was separated from the face of His Father.

Then, secondly, it may be pointed out that His death alone does not save anyone. It is easy to say much of His death. Whole volumes have been written on the death of Christ, which have somehow, in many cases, managed successfully to ignore the fact that death is an incident connected with life. Now it is a false theology which seizes on Christ's death to the exclusion of His life, and we are now paying the penalty of this mistake. For no man's death can be separated from his life. So the nature of Christ, His teaching, His obedience, His sinlessness, and many more characteristics, must all be taken into account as factors in the redemptive work of Christ. All that Christ was and did and suffered, made Him our Saviour. If, after granting that, any one wishes

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to look on Christ's death as completing the work of redemption, no exception may be taken. For He was obedient unto death, and that very obedience has given a new impulse to the life of the world. There was in Him that unresisting element which forbade Him to call upon His twelve legions of angels, and so He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. More than most things this obedience has impressed the sons of men. Yet Christ was more than the Christ of the Cross. The Apostles did not wholly connect the Cross with salvation. Neither Stephen nor Peter nor Paul did. They came to see that Christ's death was vital to the Gospel, a corner-stone, if not the chief corner-stone. But they also took into consideration that this figure on the Cross was the Son of God, and that if it was a greater humiliation for the Son of God to be put to death on the Cross than it was for Him to be born, then His death was the last word. They never, however, left out His Incarnation or His humanity. Chiefly, in the end, it was the fact that He was the Son of God that weighed most with them, and this was the confession He had most eagerly sought. They realised that His death accordingly was a sequence of His boundless love for men, and they accepted this Gospel with its wondrous constraining love, and they found it conquering the world.

Nor did they pretend that because Christ had died, there was a universal pardon. In their day the idea had not come into existence, that mere

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belief in an historical fact or the mental acceptance of a fact, could affect a life towards holiness or give it a passion for righteousness. The only people who believed that were the Pharisees. But the whole teaching of Christ is bound up with a belief in Himself as the Son of God. Christ doubtless knew that for those who accepted Him as sent from God, the whole purpose of His life and teaching and death would become plain. To accept *Him* would be to accept Him as the Christ of the Cross, and it is thus that the Cross becomes the last word both in theology and in life. For greater love hath no man ever revealed than this, and it is this sacrifice that has reached the hearts of men and changed their lives and made probable the new heavens and the new earth in which shall dwell righteousness. Many, it is true, might have difficulty in setting forth any kind of theory of the Atonement except that Christ's love led Him to die for them. He is to them the Son of God and the revelation of God. And they would be right in their theory and their faith would be valid; as instinctively right as when the centurion seeing Him die said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

In the work of redemption there is accordingly a contribution on man's part. Paul is the great expositor of the theories of redemption, and he asserts that we must work out our own salvation, seeing God works. The contribution we make is the personal acceptance of Christ as the Son of God. This is the faith by which we are justified.

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Christ has taken the barriers down. By the salvation which the Son of God has wrought justice is satisfied. If forgiveness is not justice, it is not injustice, for no one is wronged and no law offended. Paul also binds up Christ's works with His person. Christ is to Him made one with humanity, and He is therefore its representative and substitute. Christ is obedient unto death, which is the extreme penalty of sin. Paul also looks on Christ as a sacrifice. This goes to show that there are endless theories of the Atonement. The Socinian made Christ a martyr. Others have looked on His death as simply a revelation of God's love, since God could not demand payment from one who was innocent. Others have made Christ the perfect confessor of the sins of men, while yet others have considered the death as a satisfaction claimed by God.

Most of the theories, if they have erred, have done so in separating the death of Christ from Christ Himself. It is the difficulty of connecting the Christ of history with the Christ of experience. Such action leaves the Atonement incomplete. It is not possible to separate Christ from His death, but this emphasises the importance of the fact that this was Jesus Christ who died. The emphasis is as much on Christ as on the dying. This brings into view God and man, for Christ is both: the Christ who gives Himself and all that He does, as the qualitative equivalent of God's forgiveness to man. Christ's death is accordingly

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something more than a mere subjective influence. It is objectively a work rendered freely and a price paid and accepted. It is an historic fact which is yet in the heart of the believer something more, for it is by the power of the Spirit a divine impulse by faith towards a new life. It is therefore the new view of the sinfulness of sin and of the forgiveness of God, and a confirmation of the fact that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

II

It is possible that in the matter of Atonement we stand in need of clear and accurate thinking, for if we ask why so many find difficulty in accepting a theory of Atonement, we may discover that it is because so many misconceptions have crusted over the actual truth. It has been deduced, for instance, from the death of Christ, that Christ, though innocent, was punished, and that He was punished unjustly; that God punishes by substitution; that moral qualities may be transferred; that pardon may precede self-surrender; that the guilty may go free; that faith is a substitute for character; that law is stronger than God; that salvation is secured to all and that morality is unessential.

Now I am not surprised at deductions of this kind. All doctrines and dogma are liable to perversion. We are living to-day in a confusion of thought and in an age of revolt. We do not so

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much question whether Christ's work was substitutionary or representative or sacrificial or redemptive, as whether it is worth our while considering the matter at all. We have largely lost the sense of sin, and are in a haze of materialism in which it is impossible to see anything clearly. Yet it stands to reason if the Bible is true that Christ demands an explanation of Himself and His work: and it is not unjust either to ourselves or to Him that we should wish to arrive at an explanation which is both convincing and rational. This undoubtedly as to the Atonement is not easy, or rather there seem to be so many explanations that we are in a fog.

Of some things we may be sure. One is that Christ died freely. He was not forced to accept a punishment that should have fallen to the lot of others. If there is any key to the Atonement it lies in the love of God. All through His life on earth Christ was free to turn away from all that was involved in His mission, but He refused to do so. His suffering was voluntary as His coming was. God was not a monster who hated the world. He so loved it, indeed, that He was willing to yield up Christ to it, and in giving up Christ He gave Himself, and the suffering of Christ was the suffering of God.

Then it is also clear that Christ accepted chastisement but not punishment. Christ bore our sin but not our guilt. He was not guilty of any sin, but He took our place and gave satis

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faction for the violated law. This was a hard part of the atoning work of Christ, that though He had no sin He should die as if He had sinned. No doubt this gives rise to the idea that He suffered unjustly. He certainly suffered to satisfy justice, and it is by His stripes that we are healed. If God forgives us so, He has not subverted or compromised "the order of a moral universe" in so doing. There may be a problem in forgiveness, but there is not a problem in God's forgiveness, and if there is any injustice in that, it is only because there is injustice in all forgiveness. Whether Christ died for our sins or for us His death made forgiveness possible for us. The forgiveness God bestows is that of the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. For there we see the pardoning love of God. To this extent Christ's death was a mediation to reconcile us to God. Its impulse was not on God, for God originated it, and He was already full of love to the world, though He could not pardon it in its sinful state. Its only impulse on God was in so far as it took the obstacle out of the way to pardon. Its real impulse was on us for by it *we* are reconciled to God. It changes the rebellion of our hearts to penitence, and we truly say, "Father, I have sinned."

The fact is, then, both a fact in history and of experience. The fact of this death in history is one which has an eternal significance. Both the Church of Christ and the living Christian bear witness to it being a fact of experience resting on the prior

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fact of sin. It is indeed a fact of experience that follows, one may almost say naturally, from that of sin. When the Prodigal really found himself lost he found himself saved.

This disposes of the idea that God either punishes or saves by substitution. Moral qualities it is true may be transferred, but everything depends upon what we mean by the statement. Moral qualities are not transferred as the law may transfer property, where all one has to do is to sign and accept. In religion there is a reception on the part of the individual, and an acceptance of what Christ did and was. It is in this way we work out our own salvation. Otherwise our religion is but as that of the Pharisees. God is the Father of all, but He is not the Father of all as He is the Father of the Christian; Christ may be the Saviour of all, but He is not the Saviour of all as He is the Saviour of them that believe in Him. The relationship of the Christian to Christ is personal. We cannot have forgiveness from God without this personal relationship, or Christ died in vain. God cannot forgive us apart from our attitude to Christ. He must forgive us in this way if He forgives us at all, for there is no other way. Our repentance is repentance towards God through the motive power which Christ's death supplies. It is Professor Denney who has said that this is not a transaction in book-keeping; and it is he who holds that Christ is not truly the representative

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of the race, for He was not produced by us but given to us. If Christ therefore was our substitute, it does not follow that there is nothing for us to do. It is true He loved us and gave Himself for us, but in so doing He opened up the way for us to follow. The qualities which are Christ's are not transferred to us merely because Christ died, but because we are identified with Him, because indeed we are His and He accordingly is ours. This is the mystical union in Christ. "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you rest." We come to Him and we get rest, and rest includes all. It includes pardon and it includes life and it includes power. Pardon, then, does not precede self-surrender. The guilty do not go free. The Atonement is not built up on injustice. Pardon follows the giving of ourselves to God. Christ looking on the rich ruler said that this man was not far from the kingdom of God, and the only thing this ruler needed was the pardon which he could have had by the surrender of himself to Christ. He was out on the world-wide search, the vague uneasy quest for the pardon which is peace. He could have found it had he only had the will to believe in the Son of God.

It was on this that the saints of Christ's day built. It is a safe and lasting foundation, for Christ of all men finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. This is the Appeal of Jesus.

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